

A

VINDICATION
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

In Two PARTS.

I.

A DISCOURSE of the *Nature* and *Use* of
MIRACLES.

II.

An ANSWER to a late Book entitled, *A
Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.*

By SAMUEL CHANDLER.

The Second Edition.

Defendat quod quisque sentit: sunt enim judicia libera.
Cicero. Tusc. Disp. l. 4.

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A
DISCOURSE
OF THE
NATURE and USE
OF
MIRACLES.

By SAMUEL CHANDLER.



L O N D O N:
Re-Printed in the Year, M DCC XXVIII.



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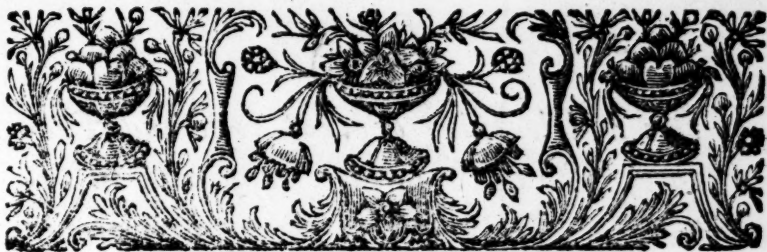
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THE PREFACE.



I is unnecessary to acquaint the reader with the occasion of writing the following discourse of miracles, which hath lain by me finished for above two years, and would long since have been offered to the publick, had I not been drawn into some farther considerations, by the author whom I have attempted to answer in the second discourse. The expectations, which the world had raised from the great abili-

*ties and learning of that reverend Pre-
late, who hath so lately appeared in be-
half of Christianity, made it improper
for advocates of a lower degree to shew
themselves; how much soever they might
have the same good cause at heart, or
be capable in their own opinion, of de-
fending it: and some perhaps may think,
that all farther apologies for Christiani-
ty, after that learned performance, are
entirely needless.*

*Undoubtedly all who have read that va-
luable work, will do his Lordship the ju-
stice to own, that many of the prophecies
of the Old Testament have been therein
carefully examined, their sense justly sta-
ted, and their reference to the MESSIAH
abundantly vindicated. Nor have any
of the aids that learning could afford been
omitted: Jewish Rabbies have been made
to militate in defence of Christianity; and
even Virgil himself shewn to sing in the
sweet strains of the gospel.*

*The reader will not, I hope, expect
any such expence of learning in the
ensuing treatise. I have not relied much*

on the authority of testimonies; but have endeavoured to vindicate our Saviour and his Apostles, upon the plain foot of reason. It was indeed necessary, to set my argument in a clear light, to consider the sentiments of the antient Jews, as to the Old Testament prophecies, and the reference they apprehended them to have to the MESSIAH; and accordingly I have allowed one short chapter, (chap. vii. of the second discourse) for that service; barely citing the places, where either Jonathan, or Onkelos, or the Hierusalem Targum, speak of the MESSIAH, as intended in the prophecies. And I the rather confined myself to these, because I think they prove enough, and their authority is unquestionable.

I cannot apprehend, how the Jews can ever answer the Bishop's book; it abundantly appearing, that their most ancient expositors, and celebrated Rabbi's expounded many of the Old Testament prophecies, in the Christian sense of them; and that, as they had their full and literal accomplishment in Jesus Christ, so they can never be

shewn to have had their accomplishment in any one else. And therefore as far as this controversy relates to the Jews, his Lordship hath left no room for any farther additions, and his work is justly to be esteemed, as an unanswerable defence of Christianity against their exceptions.

The second of these treatises, in answer to the Grounds and Reasons, &c. hath a more extensive view; and is designed, not only to obviate the objections of our Jewish adversaries, but to set the conduct of our Saviour and his Apostles in such a light, as may appear rational to every impartial and considerate mind. I need not acquaint the reader, that this part was near finished, before ever the Bishop's book was promised. The different method I have made use of, the many incidental objections I have considered, omitted by his Lordship, as not necessary to his argument, and the different interpretations I have given of particular passages of Scripture, will abundantly clear me from the imputation of having built upon his Lordship's foundation; tho' whether my foundation be equally firm, is left to the
judg-

judgment of those who will be at the pains to examine it. One thing I can, with all sincerity affirm, that my principal motive to this undertaking, was the just value I had for Christianity my self, and a desire to vindicate it from the objections of others. If my zeal hath exceeded my knowledge, I shall not be the first instance of this kind; and so shall hope to be as kindly forgotten, as other small authors, who have gone before me.

The preface to the discourse of the Grounds and Reasons is, in my judgment, an excellent defence of that liberty of every one's judging for himself, and of proposing his opinions to others, and of defending them with the best reasons he can, which every one hath a right to, as a Man and a Christian. If we have a right to think at all, we must have a right to judge for ourselves; because no one, who uses himself to thought and enquiry, can judge any otherwise, than as he is convinced of the truth or falsehood of things; and of consequence we have as certainly a natural right to communicate our ideas to others, and
propa-

propagate what we apprehend to be the truth, by all the methods of fair reasoning and argument, as we have to society and converse with others; which can only be maintained by a mutual communication of sentiments, i. e. by speaking our own real opinions, and receiving the knowledge of those of others. And it is methinks so far from being any fault in the present administration, that all learned and inquisitive men are suffered freely to maintain and propagate their opinions, that we must, in justice, as well as gratitude to his Majesty, publish it to the world, that it is against his Majesty's will, that tyranny of either kind, civil or ecclesiastical, keeps, or gains ground; and all honest and impartial minds have this to comfort them, that as his Majesty is the great assertour of the rights of conscience abroad, so they are secure of his royal protection; and countenance in the enjoyment of them at home.

Matters of speculation and practice are so vastly different in themselves, as that they cannot in the nature of things be confounded; and therefore, tho' the civil magistrate

gistrate hath a right, by all proper means
 and endeavours, to keep men from viola-
 ting the publick peace, and to punish them
 if they do; yet it cannot be argued from
 hence, that they have alike power, as ma-
 gistrates, and by the same methods, to put
 a stop to freedom of enquiry in matters of
 religion and speculation, to punish men for
 not believing the religion of their country,
 or for telling the reasons of their rejecting
 it to others: because this may be where
 there is no immorality; and because some
 persons may possibly think that all who dif-
 fer from them are infidels, and so immoral,
 and therefore liable to the censure of the ci-
 vil magistrate; and because the effects of
 infidelity and libertinism, and their influ-
 ence upon societies, are intirely different;
 and the methods proper to prevent the one
 have not the least tendency in the world to
 controul, and hinder the spreading of the
 other. And 'till it can be proved, that the
 sentiments of mens minds are as properly-
 subject to the magistrates power as such,
 as their external behaviour, that immorali-
 ty and difference in opinion from others
 are

are entirely the same, and that both may be equally cured by the very same means; it will follow, that tho' the magistrates sword may very fitly be employed to prevent all breaches of the publick peace by mens vices, yet that the progress of infidelity must be controuled another way, viz. by convincing mens consciences of the truth of Christianity, and fairly answering their objections against it.

'Tis not surprising that men, who take their religion upon trust, and who therefore can know but little of the intrinsick worth of Christianity, or of that strong evidence that there is no support it, should be in pain for it, when they find it attacked by any new objections, or old ones placed in a somewhat different view from what they were before; or that they should call out aloud to the magistrate to prevent the making of them, because they know not how otherwise to answer them.

Tis well for Christianity that this is not the case of all its defenders; and the glory of the present age that there are men of learning and great abilities, who are not only obliged

obliged by their high stations in the Church to defend Christianity, but ready to give the reasons for their faith, and abundantly able to support the truth of it, without making their appeal to the civil power, and becoming humble suiters to the magistrate to controul the spirit of infidelity; and who for this reason shew the truest regard to the religion of Christ, by their avowed declaration against all the methods of persecuting for his sake. As for such who would blend religion with politicks, and plead for a submission to the publick wisdom, and openly declare that men may be justly required to such a submission, it looks as if they suspected the strength of Christianity; otherwise, one would think, they would not invite such strange and foreign aids to their assistance, when they could have more friendly ones nearer at home, that would much more effectually support and protect it; or at least, as tho' they had some other interest to maintain than the cause of common Christianity, tho' at the same time they would willingly be thought to have nothing else in view, but the service and honour of it.

And

And if I might advise such persons it should be, first to try if they can vindicate the method by which they would propagate the religion of Christ, before they attempt the conversion of deists, whom they have prejudiced against it, by the methods they have recommended to the Civil Magistrate to support it.

If the scheme of our modern deists be founded in truth, I cannot help wishing it all good success; and it would be a crime in the civil magistrate, by any methods of violence, to prevent the progress of it: But if, as I believe, Christianity is the cause of God, it will prevail by its own native excellence, and of consequence needs not the assistance of the civil power. It once triumphed in its amazing success, when the powers of this world were bent upon its extirpation; and if they would be but content to believe for themselves only, and stand neuter between the contending parties, only preserving them from offering violence to one another, I should not be in the least afraid of the most formidable objections, that any of its adversaries

versaries can bring against the Christian revelation. Yea on the contrary, I am persuaded that nothing could be of greater service to Christianity, than to suffer, and even invite the enemies of it to speak out their difficulties with freedom; for by being thus fairly proposed, they might be as impartially considered, and solidly answered; whereby those who believe already would be more confirmed in the faith they have received, and others, who are now unbelievers, might be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Jesus; things indefensible would be given up; the spirit of charity would grow more warm and diffusive; men would become Christians, not merely thro' education and custom, but upon solid reasons and firm conviction; and of consequence the influence of Christianity, would probably be much more strong and effectual upon the consciences and lives of its professors.

On the other hand, where inquisitive men are afraid of speaking out their minds, least they should expose themselves to the displeasure of the civil power, they will be incapable

incapable of receiving the satisfaction, which others, if they knew their difficulties, might probably give them; and so will think them unanswerable, because they dare not publish them. Hence they necessarily remain unbelievers; spread privately, and therefore more effectually, disadvantageous reports of Christianity; and because they are denied the liberty of reasoning freely, give themselves the greater liberty of invective; and, I am perswaded, do themselves and others much more hurt, by sly insinuations, odious comparisons, covert yet bitter reflections, and false representations, than they could possibly do, by a fair open candid proposing their objections, to the consideration of wise and impartial men. The author before us seems to be a proof of the truth of what I have been asserting. I can scarce perswade myself to think so very ill of him, as that he fell into his way of writing out of choice; or that he would have made use of so much ridicule and banter, and, under the guise of friendship, have attacked Christianity with so much scorn and contempt, could he have been assured

assured that he might have acted the part of a more open and generous adversary, with safety to himself. We might then have seen his strongest objections, from the application of the Old Testament prophecies, stated in a fairer light ; he would have written with more temper, decency, and good manners ; and his answerers might have replied with equal strength and success, without the ungrateful task of making some reflections, which now appear unavoidable and necessary.

I would not be understood however, as tho' I was pleading for a liberty, publicly to revile and calumniate Christianity ; or indeed any established religion whatsoever. This is little less than a breach of the publick order and peace ; and the persons who allow themselves this liberty, cannot plead necessity or conscience in their defence. If every one hath a right to judge for himself, no man can have a right to insult, revile, and reproach another for differing from him ; and 'tis part of the magistrate's office, to prevent injuries of all

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sorts

sorts from being offered to the subject; and to protect all in the possession of their respective privileges. But that men should propose their difficulties openly and fairly, in order to a friendly impartial debate, is, I humbly apprehend, necessary to support the cause of truth in general, and the credit and honour of Christianity in particular.

*I cannot however but greatly wonder at the mighty zeal, which hath lately appeared in some gentlemen to run down Christianity, and to represent it as an idle and groundless institution. That men of immoral profligate lives should endeavour to persuade themselves that the religion of the gospel is a cheat, is not at all surprizing; because they have nothing to hope for, but every thing that is bad to fear, should it happen to be true. But that such, who would be thought friends to the interests of mankind, and lovers of virtue and goodness, should, with zeal and warmth, oppose, and endeavour to subvert a religion, which evidently maintains, and is built upon these principles; I know not how, by any just maxims whatsoever, to account
for*

for. Surely it will be owned, that there are a great many wise precepts, and excellent principles in the Christian scheme: and therefore when they argue against it, it should be with an exception to those things which are confessedly agreeable to truth and reason; they ought only to expose the impostures, frauds, false principles, the idle and destructive maxims, the false reasonings and comparisons that are to be found in it, if any such they can produce. And here we are willing to joyn issue with them. If they can fairly prove the principles we maintain to be false, we own we must reject them; and if they can prove these to be the principles of the gospel, we must be forced farther to give up its divine original. But doth it therefore follow, that supposing the gospel was no revelation from God, it hath nothing in it true or valuable? And would not a wise and good man, who hath any just sense of honour, or value for the interests of virtue, own and commend what was commendable in Christianity; and be content with exposing the absurdities which he imagines do

attend it, without condemning in the lump, without any difference or exceptions, the excellencies and the faults of it? And will not those who read these gentlemen's writings, in which there are no footsteps of such a necessary distinction to be found, conclude them enemies to the whole of Christianity, tho' they would be thought so only to some particular parts of it? If they were not so, would they imploy all their zeal and time in endeavouring to unsettle mens minds, without so much as attempting to lay down any more solid and substantial rules to lead men into virtue and happiness? What tho' Cicero and Seneca, and other men amongst the Heathens, were free-thinkers, and had no great opinion of the religion of their own country; were they enemies to virtue and morality too? Did they not endeavour to establish those great principles of the being of a God, and his providence, and a future state? And did they not recommend the worship of the supreme being, and the practice of universal virtue? Did they, like our modern deists, confound all

good

good and evil, and argue indifferently against them both? Fain, I perceive, they would be thought like these great men: but they must be content to be without this great honour, 'till they better understand their principles, and learn from them to write with a more sincere regard to truth and virtue.

If the enemies to religion and Christianity would do any thing to the purpose, let them disprove the being of a God, and his providence, and the necessary distinction and difference between moral good and evil. If they profess to own and believe these things; let them shew that men are not accountable for their actions, or that if they are accountable, they are rewarded and punished in the present life, and that therefore there is no need of a future reckoning. If they own there is; let them shew that the method laid down in the gospel, of God's pardoning sinners, is absurd and unsuitable to his nature and perfections. Let them lay down any more probable and likely scheme, which shall be liable to less difficulties. Let them prove that
repent-

repentance must necessarily entitle to pardon; that God cannot have wise and valuable ends to answer by the punishment of sinful men in another life; that the resurrection of the body is impossible; that the soul can subsist in a state of compleat happiness without any union to body; that Jesus Christ was no prophet; that his death and sufferings were not a proper method to spread the knowledge of God, and encourage the practice of true religion. In a word, let them prove that religion in general is a groundless idle thing, and that the grand principles of the Christian religion are absurd and false; or their method of writing against Christianity will appear to every serious mind to be indefensible and highly criminal.

Not to mention here, that they do not seem so much to argue against Christianity, as to insult and banter it. The author of the Grounds, when he should have been more seriously imployed, makes himself merry with his Rabbi, and his Devil; and represents St. Paul as talking divine nonsense, in a beautiful allegory he did not understand. And when satire fails him,
meanly

meanly stoops to methods of scandal, by making odious comparisons, and evidently false assertions.

His friend the Moderator speaks out his mind more freely, and openly denies what this other author falsely and treacherously professes to defend. He hath found out that the resurrection of Christ is an old woman's fable; and that the apostles had some interest to serve by defending and propagating the imposture, and that the miracles of Christ were — such ridiculous stories he had not patience to mention them. These are plain assertions indeed, and the true turning points of the controversy. But would one not have expected that these assertions should have been proved? Is his ipse dixit a sufficient confutation of the facts of Christianity? And are not such assertions as these, without any proofs to confirm them, an argument that he wishes Christianity may be false, tho' he is not able to prove it so? I am exceedingly surprized, that in a controversy of this sort, so much ill nature and prejudice should appear; tho' I am at
the

the same time as truly pleased to see Christianity thus thro'ly canvassed and examined. I wish that both the friends and enemies of it would be content to argue fairly, without any reflections on either side, - not well supported and proved. Then we might hope to see some happy issue of the debate : and if the following discourses shall have any influence to promote the cause of truth and virtue, 'tis all I expect or desire from the publication of them.





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A
DISCOURSE
OF
MIRACLES.

The INTRODUCTION.

 HERE is no one proposition in nature more certainly to be demonstrated, than the existence of an eternal, infinitely wise, and powerful cause, to whom all other beings owe their existence, and on whom they entirely depend. And, as it would not have been consistent with the most perfect wisdom, to have given being to creatures without some valuable end and design; we may justly reason farther, that as he made them originally, he still continues to govern them

in



in such a manner as most effectually tends to answer the original design of their creation. And as the natures, capacities and powers of the several beings, that God hath made, are vastly different, some having faculties and abilities vouchsafed to them greatly superior to what others are possessed of ; it follows, that there must also be a suitable difference in the methods of divine providence, or in the manner by which God is pleased to rule and govern them. From such of his creatures, as are destitute of reason, he cannot expect a reasonable service, because he knows they cannot perform it ; but as for those who have this excellent gift communicated to them, since they are capable of understanding the nature and obligation of laws, it is reasonable to think, that the great Author of their beings intended to govern them by proper laws, and to reward or punish them, according as they should observe, or violate them.

That mankind are capable of government by proper laws, will not, I believe, be disputed. The more difficult enquiry is, what these laws are, and by what means we attain to the knowledge of them.

And,

And, I think, it must be own'd, either that our natural powers and reasonable faculties are absolutely sufficient of themselves, without any farther help, to lead us into those just and becoming sentiments of God, and that knowledge of the duties we stand obliged to perform, which is necessary to encourage and direct our obedience : or else if human reason should, all circumstances consider'd, be found insufficient to answer this great end, that then some information from God himself is necessary, in order to instruct men what is the obedience he requires, and what the recompence they may expect in performing it.

And that God should vouchsafe to make some revelation of himself and his will to his creatures, is a supposition much more reasonable in itself, and suitable to the character he beares, of an infinitely perfect being, than that he should send them into the world, and leave them to wander in perpetual uncertainty, both with respect to their behaviour in the present life, and their expectations as to another.

If such a revelation is made, it must either be to every individual, or else to some

particular persons, who, receiving full instructions from God, and coming in his name, and with proper credentials of their divine mission, may have ability and authority to instruct others. To suppose it necessary that God should immediately reveal himself to every individual person, is to suppose it necessary that God should always act by extraordinary methods, when the more common and ordinary would be abundantly sufficient, and would be an overbearing the reasonable powers and faculties of men, without giving them any opportunity for the proper exercise, and improvement of them. As therefore it seems more reasonable to think, that God would select from among the children of men some particular persons, and favour them with special instructions, in order to qualify them to be his messengers to the rest of the world; so nothing is more certain, than that such persons, who are sent by him, must come with proper evidence and proofs of their mission from him; otherwise there could be no obligation upon any to receive and submit to them. And as miracles have been generally looked on to be proper testimonials of a person's divine authority, and
many

many have laid a very great stress on them, whilst some few have questioned their possibility, and denied them to be of any use in matters of religion; I the more easily persuaded myself to examine, with some care, into the nature of miracles, and how far they are a proof of a divine mission and authority, in him that would support such a claim by virtue of them.





C H A P. I.

Of the nature of Miracles.

BY a miracle is generally understood something very extraordinary and surprising; some visible effect above, or contrary to the common course, and laws of nature. A definition more popular than exact; because the same action may be contrary to the common laws of nature, when performed by one agent, that is very reconcileable with, and agreeable to those laws, when done by another; and therefore may be either miraculous, or not, according to the different circumstances, and capacities of the agent: Or the common laws of nature may be, in many instances, changed and varied from, and yet no miracle in the case, *viz.* when the effect produced is but answerable to the power of him that produces it.

Mr. Lock

Mr. *Lock* * defines a miracle, to be a *sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine.*

But that this account cannot be just is evident, from what this great man afterwards says, viz. † *That 'tis agreed that a miracle must be that, which surpasses the force of nature, in the established steady laws of causes and effects.* Doth it not hence follow, That a miracle must be somewhat, not which is only judged to exceed, or surpass, but which actually doth surpass these laws? Indeed Mr. *Lock* seems to have been aware, that this definition would be liable to some strong objections, which, I think, he hath not sufficiently removed. Particularly a miracle is hereby made to depend entirely on the opinion of the spectator. It receives, according to him, its being, not from the nature of the operation performed, or the power of the agent, but from the judgment passed on it by the beholder; which, in short, is to define a miracle to be nothing else, but the fiction of an idle,

* Vol. iii. p. 451. † *Ibid.*

or credulous imagination. According to this notion, that which is really a miracle, or the most extraordinary, and supernatural work, may possibly be none at all, *viz.* if the spectator should not happen to think it so: and thus our Saviour's most wonderful actions were miracles, or not, and sometimes both at once, according to the different judgments passed on them, by those who saw them. And on the other hand, that which hath nothing of the nature of a miracle in it, may yet become a real one; *viz.* if the performer can find any persons, weak and superstitious enough to think it so: and thus the impostures and craft of the worst of men, may become divine works, and proper testimonials of a divine mission and authority. This I apprehend is the certain consequence of this definition, which is in reality to define it into quite nothing at all. Whereas a miracle, according to the meaning of the sacred writings, is somewhat real; somewhat out of the common and ordinary course of nature, whatever be the opinion and judgment of the spectator concerning it. This makes no alteration in the nature of the action,
or

or in the power by which it is performed.

I thought it the more necessary, to take notice of this definition, because of the great authority and weight, which Mr. *Lock* supposes every miracle necessarily to carry with it; viz. *That every miracle is a divine attestation to every person that pretends to a divine mission ; * or that whosoever comes with, or professes to come with a message from God, cannot be refused belief, if he vouches his mission by miracles, because his credentials have a right to it ; and again † that it carries an obligation upon him that believes the miracle, to believe in and submit to every such pretender to revelation.* If indeed any person, pretending to a divine mission, doth an action, which appears so wonderful, as that any of the spectators look upon it as divine, or performed by the immediate interposition of God's power ; such persons undoubtedly, whilst under this persuasion, must look upon him that performs the work, as acting by a divine influence, and upon them-

* p. 452. † 453.

selves as under obligations to receive him as a divine messenger : and in this sense, *that will be a miracle to one, which is not so to another* ; * i. e. one person may think that to be a miracle, which another knows to be none at all. But doth it therefore follow that there are no certain criteria, by which to distinguish real miracles from supposed ? Or that every such action, supposed by some persons to be divine, is really a divine attestation ? If the miracle lies in the opinion of the spectator, 'tis possible that the action he accounts miraculous, may be done without any divine interposition, and therefore can never be in it self any testimony or witness from God. Weak and credulous persons may think the surprising tricks of jugglers to be miraculous, as some thought concerning the works of *Simon Magus*, and as was really the case with many of *Mahomet's* disciples. But must it therefore be said that God bare witness to *Simon* and *Mahomet*, and supported the pretensions of those two impostors by his own testimony ? No. The spectator's persuasion, whether right or wrong,

* Page 451.

must be the rule of his own actions; but can never make that miraculous, which in its own nature is not so, nor change the frauds of wicked men into a divine testimony.

If indeed such an account of miracles was true; there seems to be an obligation laid upon mankind, at least, I am afraid, upon the generality of men, to submit to every artful deceiver, that hath cunning enough to do things, they may not be able to account for, and wickedness enough to vend them for miracles, in order to establish a false Character, and usurped authority. I hope I have not in this matter misunderstood, or misrepresented Mr. *Lock*. If I can be convinced I have, I shall be willing to do publick justice to so great a man, by freely owning my mistake.

Others define a miracle to be *an extraordinary operation, above the power of all created beings, and performable by God alone*. But this also is liable to just exceptions. For in the first place, 'tis not necessary, that the thing performed should be above the power of every creature to do, in order to its being truly miraculous.

Nor, secondly, will it be easy to prove, that many of those things, which the scriptures call, and account miracles, are above the power of every creature to do, and performable by God only : because it will be difficult to ascertain and fix how far the abilities of created natures, superior to us, may reach, and no farther ; besides that the scriptures do expressly attribute miracles to created beings, inferior in power and wisdom to God. Thus we read, that the wicked one, spoken of by the apostle, *2 Thess. ii. 9.* should come ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν, *with all miracles signs and wonders*, according as these very words are translated, *Heb. ii. 4.* where the apostle tells us, that God bare witness to the truth of christianity σημείοις, τέρασιν καὶ ποικίλαις δυνάμειν, *with signs and wonders, and divers miracles.* And yet 'tis expressly said, in the former place, of *the man of sin*, that *his coming* with these miracles, signs and wonders, should be κατ' ἐνεργεῖαν τοῦ Σατανᾶ, *after the working of Satan*, or in the power, and with the assistance of the Devil. And whereas 'tis said he should come with *lying wonders* ; the meaning is not that his miracles

acles should be sham and counterfeit, but
 that they should be wrought in opposition
 to christianity, and of consequence in con-
 firmation of a lye ; as it expressly follows,
 y. 11. *For this cause God shall send them
 strong delusions, that they should believe a
 lie.* And our blessed Lord himself told his dis-
 ciples, that after his being taken from them,
*false prophets and false christs should a-
 rise, and shew great signs and wonders,
 insomuch that, if it were possible, they
 should deceive the very elect,* Matth. xxiv.
 24. or almost prevail with his very apostles
 to believe them. And, in the Old Testa-
 ment, God himself supposes, that a *false
 prophet might arise, and give signs and
 wonders,* in confirmation of his preten-
 sions to a prophetick mission and autho-
 rity ; and warns the *Israelites* not to re-
 gard or follow their instructions ; *Deut.*
 xiii. 1. 3. So that the scriptures suppose
 that miracles may be done by Satan and his
 instruments, in confirmation of false pre-
 tensions to a prophetick mission and au-
 thority ; and accordingly caution us against
 being deceived thereby.

In order to think distinctly and justly
 on this subject, I apprehend it will be
 neces-

necessary to consider, that as there are different orders and ranks of beings in the creation, so they are endowed with as different powers and faculties ; some fitted for more extraordinary operations than others, capable of exerting themselves with greater force and efficacy, and of performing things which, to beings of an inferior station and ability, would be absolutely impossible. Now whilst any beings act only in a manner suited to their proper capacities and powers, and perform things for which they really have a natural ability ; in such actions, tho' never so uncommon and extraordinary, there can be nothing more of wonder or miracle, than in any other instance where the effect is but adequate, or answerable to its cause. For instance ; that men should reason, distinguish between good and evil, apprehend the relations and differences of things, measure the distances, compute the magnitudes, understand the motions of the heavenly bodies, and foretell the consequences of such particular motions, is nothing strange or surprising ; because they have natural powers and faculties that do enable them for such operations ; and there is nothing more necessary

ry to such attainments, than a just and
 careful exercise and employment of the
 capacities they are possessed of. But on
 the contrary ; if stones should reason well,
 and brutes come to have the faculty of
 speech, and trees to walk and act as men ;
 this would justly be accounted miraculous,
 and the effect of some supernatural opera-
 tion ; because these things are certainly
 known to be above the reach of the
 powers and faculties of their respective na-
 tures, and there is nothing in them that
 can be the proper cause of such effects.
 Thus also for the same reason ; if a man
 should stop the sun in his course, calm the
 winds and waves, create bread for the hun-
 gry, restore limbs to the maimed, sight to
 the blind, and health and ease to the dis-
 eased and pained, by his meer word and
 command ; these things being manifestly and
 certainly above the reach of all the pow-
 ers of human nature, must be allowed to
 be truly miraculous in the man that doth
 them : I say *in the man that doth them* ;
 because these very instances would be no
 matter of just wonder or miracle at all, if
 they were visibly performed by superior be-
 ings, of powers and faculties capable of such
 opera-

operations ; no more miraculous, than that the effect should be answerable to its cause ; or that God himself, to whom all power belongs, should be able to bring such events to pass, which are above the power of all created beings whatsoever.

Hence I think a miracle in general should be defined, *An action done, or an operation visibly performed by any being, that is really and truly above the reach, natural power and capacity of that being who doth it, of himself, and without the assistance of some superior agent, to perform.* And therefore a miracle, when spoken of as done by a man, in confirmation of a divine mission, *is somewhat visibly performed by him, in order to prove himself to be sent of God, which is strictly and truly above all his natural powers and capacities ; and which he could not of himself perform, without the influence and assistance of some superior agent.* Speech is a faculty natural to man ; but that a stone should speak, is as truly a miracle as that a man should fly. That a man should command the winds and waves into submission and silence, or stop the course of the heavenly bodies, is as real
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a miracle, as that he should, by his word, create the world out of nothing. But should an angel visibly perform these things, we might indeed be surprized at so unexpected an event; but could not, according to the foregoing account, determine it to be a miracle, till we could prove the operation to be beyond the power and ability of the performer.

Hence it follows, that the same action may be a miracle, or not, according as it is performed by an agent of inferior, or superior abilities; as in the already mentioned instance. Should the sun stop, or change his morion, at the word or command of a meer man, this would be a proper miracle, because above the reach of all the powers of human nature: but should some superior agent arrest the sun, and hold him fixed and immoveable, or cause him to run a quite different course from what he now doth; it would be no more a miracle, supposing his power equal to such a work, than for a man to hold a bowl in his hand, or throw it *East* or *West*, just as it suited his purpose or inclination.

Hence also it follows, that no beings whatsoever can, of themselves, perform real mi-

racles. Men may do miracles by the assistance of angels, and angels by the assistance of some superior powers, and these again under the special influence of almighty God: *i. e.* with such assistance they may bring to pass events, which otherwise they could never have done. But that they cannot of themselves do proper miracles, according to the account I have given of them, is as evident, as that they cannot perform impossibilities. Even the actions of God himself will not, upon this scheme, be miraculous; because he can act by the assistance of no being superior to himself, being the first and greatest of all beings; and because nothing, that is an object of power, can be impossible to him, *to whom all power belongs.*

So that what is, or what is not a miracle, is to be determined, not by the extraordinariness of the work, or the opinion of the spectator; but by the agreement and proportion between the action performed, and the capacities and powers of the agent. If the action done be certainly above all the powers of the agent, of himself, and unassisted, to perform; it is a true and proper miracle, and proves all that a miracle can, or need to prove, *viz.* the co-operation
and

and assistance of some invisible and superior being ; as shall afterwards be more fully shewn.

Upon this scheme we need not spend many words to prove the possibility of miracles. 'Tis but to suppose, what I apprehend few will deny ; that there are other beings existing, superior to us, by whose assistance and influence we may be enabled to do things, which otherwise we could not do : at least 'tis but supposing such a power in God, to act upon, and influence the creatures he hath made : and I believe it will appear, that there remains no farther difficulty about miracles, from the impossibility of them.

'Tis a much more material objection that may be raised against the matter, as I have now stated it, that even this account leaves us at a loss how to determine, when any thing is a proper miracle, or not ; because we know not all the powers of human nature, and therefore cannot pass a safe judgment, as to many things, whether they are within, or beyond its reach.

But even to this it may be answered, that there is not really so much difficulty in this matter, as some may imagine. Most

persons seem to be competent judges in the case; and it requires no tedious study, or intricate reasoning to understand, generally speaking, the powers of human nature.

It seems indeed to be a much easier matter to judge what things are, or are not within the power of men to effect, than to determine how far human knowledge may extend. Our Minds are of noble capacities, and able to search out many of the most difficult truths. 'Tis the proper province of the soul to reason and judge; to consider the relations and differences of things; and to draw from certain premises their natural and necessary consequences. And therefore whatever degrees of knowledge we gain, from observation, experience, and reason, from conversing with books, or studying the arts and sciences; this is plainly to be accounted for: our natural powers and faculties render us capable of such improvements. And therefore whatever events are foretold, which depend on certain laws, clearly understood, and plainly to be demonstrated; or whatever experiments we can make, in consequence of foregoing principles, justly stated, and evidently proved

proved; these will have nothing of the nature of miracles in them, however unaccountable they may appear to persons who know not those certain and regular laws, according to which they proceed. And indeed, till we can certainly determine the measure and capacity of our reasonable powers, we cannot bound the extent of human knowledge, nor fix those limits, beyond which the understandings of men cannot reach. However,

Should an ignorant unlearned person, bred up from his infancy to the most servile employments, whose mind had never once been improved by reading or reflection, in an instant become able to solve the most intricate problems, to understand and demonstrate the most difficult mathematical propositions, which have been the labour and search of many years, and in a moment grow wiser than those great men, whose improvements have been the reward of tedious application, and of long and painful study; this, as it could not be accounted for, from any of the known faculties of our minds, must necessarily be esteemed as the effect of some supernatural agency and influence.

And as to external operations; I am persuaded, that, to careful inquisitive men, it will be still a less difficult matter to determine, what things are, and what things are not, within the reach of human power. We find by constant experience, that we can move the members of our own bodies, and put our selves into various shapes, postures, and places; that we can raise new ideas in the minds of others by action and converse; that by *contact* we can alter the position, retard or quicken the motion, change the situation of the parts of matter, in proportion, as the power of the agent is superior to the resistance of the body wrought on. These things proceed according to certain fixed laws, of nature's establishing; and therefore have nothing of real miracle or wonder in them.

But now let any man try if he can supersede or change these laws of nature; if he can give solidity and firmness to the water to support him; if he can so purify and spiritualize his body, as that the air shall bear him; if he can raise new ideas in the minds of others by a meer turn of thought; if he can operate on distant bodies by an act of his will; and overcome a superior
 resistance

resistance by a lesser : and the consequence will soon discover the vanity of the attempt, and shew, at least, to what things human power cannot possibly extend.

'Tis true, that the capacities of some men are much nobler than those of others, their knowledge vastly greater, and their powers of acting proportionably more extensive. And therefore it may be farther said, that we are not proper judges of others, and cannot determine how far the powers of human nature may reach, and no farther ; because we know what we can, and what we cannot do our selves : at least, that the generality of men are very incompetent judges in this case ; who having, never made any just enquiries into the extent of their own powers, will be often in danger of taking that, which is surprizing to them, because uncommon, for what is truly miraculous.

Thus for instance : Possibly there may be some barbarous nations, who, being altogether unacquainted with the laws and motions of the heavenly bodies, might judge it a thing absolutely impossible, to determine the exact time of eclipses ; and be ready to account any person under a pro-

phetick miraculous inspiration, who should come amongst them, and exactly fix the time of such appearances. Another perhaps, by flight of hand, by the application of some unknown medium, or by some secret art and contrivance, might effect many surprizing and unusual things: which, by ignorant and unlearn'd persons, that knew not how better to account for them, might be deemed miraculous, and imputed to the operation of some invisible power. What guard have such persons against the delusion of such impostures: or what marks whereby to distinguish them from real miracles?

I answer, as before, that whatever is surprizing is not therefore immediately to be accounted a miracle; nor any man to be esteemed as under a supernatural information, merely for the sake of being wiser than others. Things predicted can never be arguments of any person's acting under the influence of a superior power, till the events foretold are come to pass; no nor then, if those things depended on a train of certain and necessary causes, which, for ought we know, the relater might understand; or which there were many probabilities to induce him to believe would, some time or other, come to pass: And there-
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fore there are but few cases, wherein the meer foretelling things to come ought to be immediately allowed miraculous, or the person predicting them owned, as one acting under some invisible influence or inspiration.

And as for those surprizing things, which may be sometimes performed by cheats and cunning juglers, by chymists or mathematicians, from an extraordinary skill in the powers of nature; there will be less reason for any to account them miraculous, and therefore less danger of their being imposed on by them. For there will be many circumstances attending them, to be observed by a cautious spectator, that will discover the slight of hand by which they are performed, and give a strong presumption of the fraud and imposture of him, who by such works would endeavour to persuade others, that he acts by a divine power and authority. There will be such a manifest plainness and sincerity, such a freedom and openness of behaviour, in a good man, acting under a divine influence, and sure of a divine assistance, as can never be found in the tricks of an imposter; who is obliged to perform his feats as it were in private, and at a distance from others,

for fear of a discovery ; lest the fraud should be seen through, and the falseness and vanity of his pretensions thereby become exposed.

But however, tho' there may be some things, which may appear like miracles, though they really are not such ; yet it cannot be denied, but that there are others, which we may as certainly know to be above all the powers of human nature, as we can be sure of any one single truth whatsoever ; things which, at first view, will manifestly discover themselves to be the effects of some cause more excellent than our selves. That any man should foretel events, which depend on certain fixed laws of causes and effects, which he understands, is not to be wondered at : but that he should foretel very distant things, depending on the arbitrary determination of free agents, or which seem to be intirely at the pleasure and ordering of providence, can, I think, never be accounted for, but from some intimation given him by a wiser and more knowing being than himself. That men should understand, and speak different languages, after a long course of study and application, is nothing more than may be expected : but that mean and unlearned persons,

sons, who were never bred up to the knowledge of books, and never had the opportunity of conversing with men of foreign countries, should, in an instant, become acquainted with all the languages of the most different nations, so as to understand others when speaking, and to be able to speak distinctly themselves; supposing the fact real, it is absolutely impossible, that it can be owing to any lucky turn of the blood and spirits, to any thing of flight or craft, or in a word, to any thing less than the influence and information of some superior intelligence. Once more; proper remedies, skilfully applied, have a natural tendency to cure diseases, to strengthen the constitution, and confirm the bodily vigour and health: but to be able, by a single word, to make a sick man well, the lame and maimed sound and whole, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the dead to return to life; these things are as evidently above all the powers of mankind, without the assistance of some superior being, as the greatest impossibility in nature. Whoever the person be, that can perform such wonderful works as these, doth real miracles, and thereby evidently proves himself to act by some supernatural

pernatural help ; if not under the immediate influence of the God of nature himself.

But supposing for once, that men should be deceived in taking that for a miracle, which really is none ; yet are they not, meerly on this account, obliged to submit to any one pretending to a divine commission, and producing such works as the vouchers of it. I do not apprehend that such things as seem most to exceed the powers of human nature, done by any person, are, in themselves, a sufficient testimonial that he is sent of God ; unless they can be proved to exceed the power of other beings superior to us, and to be done by the immediate interposition of God himself. This indeed will be an argument of his divine commission, and of the truth of every thing he delivers, confirmed by such testimonials. But this we shall find a very difficult task to prove ; because we know not what different orders of created natures there may be, and how much superior the powers and faculties imparted to some, are to those of others. Till we can ascertain this, we ought not too positively to assert, even of the most wonderful events that have hitherto happened, that they were produced immediately by the hand of
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of God, and not by the ministration or agency of inferior spirits.

So that all that real miracles seem directly to prove, is, either that some superior agent hath furnished the person who doth them, with a power which otherwise he had not; or that there is such a confederacy and union between some invisible power and that person, as that for certain ends, and at particular times, such effects shall be produced by his power, and at the others bidding and command. But whether this be done by a good, or a bad spirit, by God and his ministers, or by his and our enemies, other circumstances must determine.

Such works, indeed, will command our attention and regard, and seem to be an obligation upon us to consider whatever comes attested with such testimonials. But that they are not sufficient vouchers, in themselves, of a divine commission, is evident; because real miracles have been wrought, to weaken the credit of an authority actually derived from God; and because the scriptures suppose that they may be wrought in confirmation of false pretences, and in opposition to the true religion. The producing of serpents, blood, and frogs, was, at least,

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to the judgment which the spectators could form of it, as real a miracle, when done by the *Ægyptian* sorcerers, as when done by *Moses*. It was a work which argued if in one, of consequence in both, the assistance of some superior power; nor could any of those who saw it believe it to be any other than a real miracle, *i. e.* they must attribute it to the operation of some invisible agent. If therefore every miracle be a proof of the divine mission of him, who would confirm such an authority by doing it; it follows, that the *Ægyptians* would have been bound to have acknowledged the divine mission both of *Moses*, and their own *Magicians* too; *i. e.* to own both parts of a contradiction to be true. To say that these things, when done by the magicians, were not real, but counterfeit miracles, is an objection, without any proof to support it, and I think a plain begging the question. The scripture doth not call them counterfeit, but supposes the transformation as real, when caused by the *Magicians*, as when effected by *Moses*. Nor do I see any reason at all to account it incredible, upon the supposition that they had the assistance of evil spirits, and acted in

in confederacy with them, in opposition to God, and his servant *Moses*.

If therefore real miracles are not, in themselves, sufficient proofs of the divine authority of him who works them, neither can things falsely supposed to be so. Every pretender to divine revelation, whether his miracles be real or counterfeit, is not to be immediately believed. His character and message are first to be considered, before we can reasonably allow him to be a messenger and prophet from God. Let his works be ever so wonderful, men need not be imposed on. There are methods within their power, of finding out the falsehood of such a man's pretensions, and of proving the impostor to be either a cunning juggler, or else in league with evil and destructive spirits. If men will but use the reason they have, they may easily preserve themselves from the most powerful delusions, and guard their minds from danger, in the midst of the most artful impostures; tho' supported by all the cunning and subtilty of men, or with the assistance and wonderful works of all the powers of darkness, in confederacy with them.

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But yet this may not be thought sufficient to solve the difficulty ; and some may be apt to imagine, that 'tis not consistent with the goodness of God, to suffer men, under the influence of evil spirits, to do miracles in confirmation of a real imposture. Yet, supposing it consistent with the divine goodness to give to any beings powers and faculties superior to ours ; I do not see how the suffering them to exercise those powers can be inconsistent with it. If God had any where commanded us to look on every miracle as a sufficient proof of a divine mission, in him who pretends to it, undoubtedly he would suffer none to work miracles but himself, or his own messengers, in confirmation of his will deliver'd by them. But if God hath been pleas'd to acquaint us with the power and craft of evil spirits, and caution'd us against being deceived by them ; and if there are certain rules to distinguish between those works done by the divine power, and those performed by the assistance of the Devil ; rules that lye open and plain to every serious enquirer : the permission of evil spirits to do wonderful works, ought indeed to render us more careful and diligent in our enquiry

enquiry into the proofs of every pretension to a divine mission, but carries in it not the least imputation upon the divine justice and goodness; because there will be no other danger of our being imposed on by them, than what arises from our own negligence, and want of serious impartial consideration. Both *Simon Magus* and *Apollonius Tyaneus* are reported to have done many strange and surprizing things; and yet that both these were impostors might be as certainly known, as almost any truth whatsoever; viz. because they taught doctrines inconsistent with true piety, and did many things contrary to plain morality. Besides, if this argument from the divine goodness proves any thing, I think it will prove too much; viz. that 'tis inconsistent with the divine goodness to permit any thing to happen, that may prove a powerful temptation to men to forsake the truth, or believe an imposture: for I cannot imagine any reason why the permission of evil spirits to assist men in doing wonderful works, to support their false pretensions, should be inconsistent with the divine goodness, but because it might probably induce others to believe them. If so, of consequence whatever

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would prove an equally strong temptation, must be for the same reason inconsistent with the goodness of God to permit : and thus we shall be scarce able to vindicate his wisdom and goodness, in suffering persecutions, because they have a stronger tendency to prevail with many to desert the truth, than real miracles, wrought by bad men, can have to persuade them to believe an imposture.

If indeed there should happen a competition between any person sent of God, and another acting under the influence of evil spirits, each pretending to confirm their mission by miracles and wonderful works; it is reasonable to imagine that God would so far interpose, as to shew where the imposture lay ; either by restraining that power by which impostors act, or enabling his own messengers to perform such extraordinary things, in which evil spirits could not imitate and rival them. For, as the end of God in revealing his will to men is, that they may know and practise it ; it seems inconsistent with his most perfect wisdom, to suffer bad men, acting under the power of evil spirits, to exceed his own servants in the proof they give of their mission from him. For if two contending parties each do the

same

same wonderful works, to establish quite different interests ; so long, of consequence, they before whom the works are wrought, must suspend their judgments, neither of the parties having as yet any right to be believed ; and the power, which at last appears superior, will claim and deserve the greater regard. And therefore if God should suffer impostors to do works, more wonderful in themselves, and more in number, under the influence of their principals by whom they act, than his own messengers ; this would be a weakening of their credit, and tend to overthrow the design of their mission from him : which is inconsistent with the most perfect wisdom to permit.

And agreeably hereto, in the contest between *Moses* and the *Egyptian* magicians, we find that *Moses* gave incontestable proofs, that he acted by a power vastly superior to what they did, both by restraining that influence by which they acted, and doing those wonderful works in which they could not imitate him. Whilst the works they each did were the same, and seemed to require the same power to do them, so far the contest was undecided, and to which side the victory would turn must have been to the

spectators doubtful. But when the magicians arts became all ineffectual, and the power by which they acted was entirely restrained, *Moses* triumphed in his continued power to do miracles; and from his works the spectators might easily conclude, that heaven itself seemed to decide the victory in his favour. Thus far 'tis reasonable to think that God may at all times interpose. But in other cases; as I do not see any need of the divine interposition, so I think we cannot very safely argue from the goodness and wisdom of God, how far he is oblig'd to restrain superior powers from acting agreeable to the capacities he hath given them.

It seems a matter of greater difficulty to reconcile this account of miracles with some expressions of our blessed Lord, relating to the proof of his mission from his heavenly father by his works. For he tell us,* *If I bear witness of my self, my witness is not true; i. e.* " if there was no other proof of my mission from God, but my own word or testimony of myself, I should not deserve to be believed " : and therefore he refers them to his works, as the proper

* John v. 31.

testimonials that God had sent him. †† *But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the father hath given me to finish, the same works, that I do, bear witness of me, that the father hath sent me; as though the wonderful works he did, were in themselves, full evidence that the father had sent him. Agreeably hereto he elsewhere † tells the Jews: If I do not the works of my father, believe me not; but if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the father is in me, and I in him.* And hence in another place * he tells them, *If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen, and hated both me and my father.* Their rejecting him after they had seen his works, was an evident proof that they hated him, and the father who sent him; so that he seems to condemn them, upon account of their rejecting the evidence of his works; and thereby declares those works to be a sufficient proof of his divine authority and mission.

†† John v. 31, 36. † John x. 37, 38. * John xv. 24

In answer to which difficulty, let it be considered, that where any works carry along with them the proofs of their being done by a divine power, either by the immediate interposition of God himself, or by the ministration of other beings, acting by commission from him ; such works are a sufficient evidence of that person's commission from God, who doth them : and whatever he confirms by such proofs, ought undoubtedly to be received ; because 'tis not consistent with God's wisdom or goodness, to be himself the instrument of confirming any false pretences to a divine authority and inspiration ; nor with the character of any good being whatsoever, to lend his assistance for the support of an imposture. And therefore, if the works which our blessed Saviour did, where of such a nature, or attended with such peculiar circumstances, as were sufficient to prove them to be wrought by the immediate interposition of God himself (and of this kind, in my judgment, seem to be those extraordinary works of his, creating limbs for the maimed, and bread for the multitude, and raising the dead) or any other beings commissioned by him ; undoubtedly their not believing him for the works sake,

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was owing either to a sinful inadvertence, or criminal obstinacy.

But if this should not be allowed, yet I think it no difficult matter to make it appear, that our Saviour's reasoning was just, if we consider the peculiar circumstances of the *Jews* to whom he spoke. There were many in whom they believed as prophets, and whom they revered as inspired persons, tho' several ages were past since they had lived in the world ; whose works therefore they had never seen, and which, had they seen them, would have appeared vastly inferior to those done by Christ. Thus they had a great opinion of and veneration for *Moses* ; who was, as it were, the founder of their nation, both as to religion and politics. They looked on him as one who had been under a divine influence, and acted by immediate commission from God. And as for the succeeding prophets, they esteemed them as persons inspired by his spirit ; and so accounted themselves under obligations to believe and regard whatever they found on record delivered by them, as the message and will of God himself. Now 'tis evident, that the miraculous works and predictions of *Moses*, and the other prophets,

were the principal reasons of their belief in, and veneration for them. And therefore, if our blessed Saviour did as great, or even greater miracles than *Moses*, or any of the prophets who lived before his appearance in the world ; the evidence of his divine mission was in itself greater than theirs ; and therefore the *Jews*, at least, before whom his miracles were performed, ought to have received him for the very work's sake. Now this was the case, even the *Jews* themselves being judges. Thus *Nicodemus* argued him to have been a *teacher sent from God, because* as he himself said to Jesus, *no man can do the works which thou dost, except God be with him* ; strongly implying that they were very extraordinary ; *John* iii. 2. In another place, we are told, the multitude cryed out, surprised with his wonderful works, *It was never so seen in Israel*, *Mat.* ix. 33. And again, *Many of the people believed on him, saying, when Christ comes, will he do more miracles than these, which this man hath done ?* *John* vii. 31. when nevertheless they expected that *Christ* should excel, even on this account, all the prophets that were before him. And 'tis on this account, that our Saviour declares their sin, in rejecting him, to

be peculiarly heinous. * *If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin. But now they have both seen, and hated both me and my father.* So that he blames them, not meerly for rejecting the evidence he gave of his divine mission by miracles, but because they rejected his evidence, tho' it was superior to that of all the other prophets that were before him; in whom they nevertheless believed.

And to conclude this head, we shall farther find, that whatever stress our Lord, at some times, seems to have laid on his miracles, yet elsewhere he appeals to his word, and the doctrines he taught; which he represents to be of such a nature, as that the miraculous works he did, in confirmation of them, could be effected by no other power but that of God. Thus he urges it as a reason that men should love him, or receive and believe in him, because the † word which they heard *was not his, but the father's which sent him.* And in another place †† he tells us, that God would judge every one that should reject him, *Because I*

* John xv. 24. † John xiv. 24. †† John xii. 49.

have not spoken of myself, but the father hath sent me ; he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And to mention no more, his answer to the Jews, who said *he cast out Devils through Belzebub, the chief of Devils,* makes it abundantly plain, that it was not miracles alone, that he insisted on as a sufficient proof of his mission from God his father ; but miracles, as wrought in confirmation of doctrines opposite to the interest of Devils. * *Every kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation ; and every city or house divided against it self shall not stand. And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then shall his kingdom stand ?* The bare casting out of Devils from a possessed person, was no argument that Satan was divided against himself. This he might have suffered impostors to do, to give the greater confirmation and credit to the imposture, and hereby to have strengthened his own authority and interest among mankind. But if any person doth miracles, who himself is an eminently good and

* Mat. xii. 25, 26.

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 ledge and worship of the one only living and
 true God, and proves his pretensions by
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 Devil, as that the Devil cannot be supposed
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C H A P. II.

Of the use of Miracles.

A V I N G in the former chapter stated my notion of miracles, and cleared it from the principal difficulties that might seem to clog it ; I now proceed to consider the use of miracles, and to shew for what reasons one might probably expect they should be wrought ; or for what ends God may be reasonably thought to interpose, in order to produce them.

And 'tis evident, at first view, that the design of miracles cannot be to prove, or establish the proofs of the principles of natural religion ; because the very supposition of God's interposing by miracles, supposes also the certainty of his being, perfections and providence ; and because every pretended revelation is to be judged of by the dic-

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States of reason, and its conformity to those natural notions of God and goodness which are implanted in us, and by which all doctrines, in confirmation whereof miracles are pretended to be wrought, must be examined, before we can be under any obligation to receive them. So that the very supposition of a miracle implies, that these notions are true, and therefore cannot be wrought to prove them so.

'Tis indeed reasonable to think, that God may send a person into the world, furnished with a power to work miracles, to recover mankind to a sense of these important principles and truths, that have been long buried under deep ignorance and vice ; as well as to reveal to them other matters, of great moment and consequence to their happiness. This certainly was one view of that revelation God made by *Moses* to the *Jews* ; and of his *speaking to us, in these latter days, by his son*. Such was the stupidity and wickedness that had almost universally prevailed, as made it necessary, that a messenger from God, furnished with the noblest credentials of his divine mission, should appear, and preach up these first and most necessary, tho' almost forgotten and forsaken

principles, of the being of a God, and his providence, and the obligations to virtue and goodness. But then 'tis to be considered, that the miracles wrought by such a person, are not wrought as proofs of the being of a God, or his providence, or the difference between good and evil ; but as proofs of his mission from God, and hereby to procure the greater authority and credit to his preaching. And indeed there is nothing more evident, than that the preaching up a mission from God, supposes the reality of his being, perfections, and providence, and that therefore miracles cannot be wrought, or appealed to, as the proofs of it.

Nor are miracles necessary as a farther testimony to the truth of any former revelation, which hath already been sufficiently confirmed of God, and the proofs of which may be found out by every serious and impartial enquirer ; agreeable to that answer of *Abraham* to the rich man in the parable, desiring that *Lazarus* might be sent to his father's house. * *Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, nay, father*

* Luke xv. 19, &c.

Abraham ; *but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, if they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rose from the dead.* The revelation of God by *Moses* was sufficiently attested ; therefore to ask new miracles in proof of it was unreasonable, and had such a request been granted, it would have proved ineffectual to answer the purpose intended by it. 'Tis indeed inconsistent with the wisdom, justice and goodness of God, to require men to believe, or punish them for not believing, what they cannot have sufficient evidence to convince them of the truth of. But when any former revelation hath been sufficiently attested, and the arguments for the certainty of such a revelation may be known, and understood by application and enquiry ; if men, either by negligence or sloth, thro' pride and obstinate prejudice, will not see, or not acknowledge the evidence ; as they act a very unreasonable part, so I cannot apprehend that the divine *him*, being is under any obligation, from any of *them* his perfections, to work new miracles to *father* persuade them to believe, what where was sufficient reason for their believing without *them*. God hath been pleased so to order
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the circumstances of religion, as that it shall be a matter of our choice ; and to cover it with some difficulties, that men may use care and diligence in searching, both into its nature and evidence ; that so their very believing may be an act of the greatest reason, and not owing to an overbearing testimony and power, but to those rational motives and inducements, which are naturally suited to convince, and persuade men. But if God must work new miracles, to satisfy every one's unreasonable cavils against the evidence of religion ; there will be no longer room for enquiry, nor use of reason ; but God will be under a necessity of continually working miracles, to gratify the pride and vanity of every one that requires them.

The truth of former facts can only be known by testimony ; and the testimony may be of such a nature, and attended with such degrees of probability, as that it may be altogether as unreasonable to reject what is thus confirm'd, as to deny the truth of any demonstration whatsoever. The adversaries of the christian religion do not scruple to believe, that there were such men as *Jesus Christ*, *Simon Magus*, and *Apollonius Tyaneus* ; who pretended to be extraordinary per-

persons, and to do many wonderful works.
 Nor do I find that they make any great difficulty of allowing that the two latter did in fact many such things; since they have been set up in competition with *Jesus Christ*; who 'tis universally confess'd, that there were no doctrines worthy of God, nor conducive to the happiness of men, that either of them had to support by these works; and altho' the evidence for the facts themselves is very small, and not, by a thousand degrees, so strong, as what may be produced for the truth of our Saviour's miracles. And yet as to these miracles of our Saviour they are incurable unbelievers, and make the most obstinate resistance to them, tho' evidently wrought for the noblest ends, viz. to recover men to a sense of God and goodness, and lead them into the way of happiness; and tho' the evidence for the reality of them is, I verily believe, as great, as we have for the certainty of any past facts whatsoever. Now if thus by unreasonable prejudices they prevent themselves from discerning that full evidence, on which Christianity is founded, and then reject it, under the pretence of its not having sufficient evidence; I see no reason why they should expect any fresh proof, nor to think

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they would be convinced by it, if they had it.

It is by many of the more considerate deists themselves confess'd, that *Jesus Christ* was an excellent moralist; that his precepts were agreeable to reason, and to our natural notions of God and goodness; and that he was himself a very good and virtuous man, excepting his claim to a divine authority and mission, which they look upon as a meer fiction, and upon all his miracles as idle stories, or the deluding tricks of a cunning juggler. But I would ask, have they any other ground to believe that he gave such precepts, than they have to believe that he did such works? It is reasonable to think, that a man who gave such excellent descriptions of God, who with such strength and force, preached up the necessity and obligation of moral duties, and so often inculcated the belief of future rewards and punishments, and died to confirm these things by his blood; could yet carry on an imposture throughout his whole life; and, by such a notorious affront to God's majesty, and imposition upon Mankind, act in defiance to the belief of a God, the obligations of virtue, and the influence of those rewards and punishments which he taught? Or have the evangelists given us a true account of

our Saviour's morality, and yet invented the story of his miracles, to do the greater honour to their master ? If they were such very bad men, as first to invent, and then spread the story of his miracles ; I should as little credit the account they have given us of his morals. Or shall we, to finish the matter at once, reject the whole story of Christ as a fable, and deny that he ever lived in the world, and that the morality of the gospel is of his teaching, and the works ascribed to him of his performing ? Then must we be reduced to the manifest absurdity, of denying the strongest evidence for the truth of facts, that ever was, or can be given to the world. No one proposition in nature is more evidently true than this ; that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who lived and died in *Judea* : and if we allow this, we must farther acknowledge, that he led an excellent life, and taught admirable lessons of morality : and then we must also be forced to believe one step farther, *viz.* that he did many wonderful works in confirmation of them ; because we have no other evidence for the truth of one than of the other. So that Christianity stands, at least, upon the foot of very great probability ; such

as would abundantly persuade in any other case. It seems to have all the certainty which can belong to things of such a nature : and therefore as men's infidelity is their fault, they ought not to expect any new testimony from God, for the proof of what he hath already abundantly confirmed.

The possibility of Miracles, as I have stated them, I believe none will doubt of ; and therefore I can see no objection of any force, that can be brought against them, but either that they were improper to answer the end designed by them, or that the end might have been more effectually answered another way. The end of them undoubtedly was to give a sufficient credit and authority to our Lord's person and pretensions. It was necessary to give a proper weight to his doctrines and precepts, that men should know he was the messenger of God, and authorized by him to instruct and save them : otherwise the very attempt to introduce a new religion would have been foolish, and must have proved ineffectual. It would have been impossible ever to have persuaded the *Jews* to abandon a religion, actually instituted by God, and for which, on this account, they had the highest veneration, without the most
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express and clear warrant from God himself; or to have prevailed with the *Gentiles* to abandon the altars of their deities, without some incontestable proofs, that those persons acted by a divine commission, who preached to them *to turn from such vanities*. And what other proof could there be so strong and convincing as miracles? These certainly proved them to act by a supernatural assistance; and from a thousand other circumstances it was easy to prove, that they acted by commission from God. It was not sufficient that they affirmed this of themselves; nor were their doctrines alone, tho' agreeable to truth and reason, an evidence of their divine inspiration. To give them therefore their proper weight, and in order to their being universally receiv'd amongst men, it was necessary that those who preached them should be declared the messengers of God; either by a voice from heaven, or else by having such a power and authority communicated to them, as should evidently prove, that they acted under a superior agency and influence: of which their doing miracles, things beyond the power of human nature to do, was an abundant demonstration. If then it be a design worthy of God to recover men to virtue and happi-

ness, to authorize persons for this purpose, and give them sufficient credentials for the satisfaction of others ; 'tis evident that miracles are proper to answer this end, and naturally conduce to subserve the gracious designs of providence, in reference to the perfection and happiness of men : and therefore there can be no argument brought from the perfections of God, why he should not himself interpose in this matter, or suffer others to do it in his name, unless any one can find out a more proper method to accomplish such an end ; to which I have hitherto been a stranger.

And since, if God should give any person this testimonial of his being sent of him, the proof would be so far peculiar to the time when such a one should appear, as that none but those, with whom he conversed, could be eye witnesses to the facts themselves, and all others could receive no knowledge of them but by tradition, and the report of those who saw them, or to whom they related them ; if such tradition be faithful, if there be concurrent accounts of the facts themselves, and if those who relate them are men of credit and veracity ; in a word, if we have the same certainty of them,

them, as we can have of any other past facts ; the reason is the same why we should believe the one as the other. And if the Christian religion stands upon such a foundation of probability as this ; it must be owing to an unreasonable criminal prejudice in any to reject it, or to require new proofs of its divine authority and original.

If it be said by any, could we but see one new miracle wrought in confirmation of Christianity, it would be a great satisfaction to us, as to the truth of those pretended to be wrought by Christ and his apostles : I answer ; If those miracles were not in themselves incredible ; if the end said to be answered by them is consistent with the perfections of God, and conducive to the true interests of men ; and if there be as much proof that they were in fact wrought, as the nature of the thing will bear ; to ask a farther proof, of any sort, is an unreasonable request : and therefore, as there is no need for any fresh interposition of providence to confirm what is already sufficiently proved, there can be no room to expect it.

But supposing that God should condescend to gratify such a desire as this, what would be the consequence ? Would such become

immediate converts to the Christian faith, upon the evidence of one or a few miracles, who reject it tho' innumerable miracles have been wrought to confirm it? I am afraid their infidelity would not be so soon or easily overcome; nor the lesser proof effect, what the much greater cannot do. Should a real miracle be wrought before them, it would be, either only a proof that they were possible: but that is already as evident, as that there are beings to us superior in power and wisdom; and so far would be of no service to the proof of Christianity: Or else being wrought in favour of the Christian religion, might be looked on as an additional testimony to the truth of it; but even this would be no farther testimony, *i. e.* no other sort of testimony, than what we have already to depend on; and there would be much more reason for a suspicion of fraud and cheat in one, or a few works of this kind, than in the innumerable many wrought by Christ and his apostles. Or should such persons, who are not satisfied with the proof, on which Christianity already stands, believe the miracle real; I cannot be sure, that they would not be of the same temper with the *Jews* in our Saviour's time; who, when they could

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not deny the miracle, prevented the good effect it ought to have had on their minds, by crying out, *This fellow casteth not out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of devils.* Mat. ix. 34. Or that they would not reason like the priests and Saducees in the *Acts*, iv. 10. who, upon the wonderful cure wrought on the impotent man by *Peter* and *John*, came to this wise and honest resolution, *What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all, and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no farther amongst the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak hence forth to no man in this name.* And I would farther ask, in what manner they would have this testimony by miracle given? A miracle in itself would no more prove Christianity to be true, than any other institution whatsoever, unless applied to this purpose. Would they therefore have God himself to speak to them, and tell them that this miracle was wrought in confirmation of it? This supposes something else necessary to convince them, than the Christian doctrines confirmed by miracles; and so supposes the very evidence they desire insufficient. Or would they have a
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second person sent into the world, to preach up the divine authority and religion of Christ, and confirm it by new miracles? Will they therefore believe Christianity to be true, if they hear a person declare it so, and see him work a miracle to confirm it? If this be a reasonable ground of belief, they ought to become immediate converts to the Christian faith; which, they may know, is supported by this sort of proof already, in its highest perfection. And therefore their disbelieving Christianity, notwithstanding this evidence for the truth of it, shews they would not think this kind of proof sufficient. And indeed how could they reasonably be convinc'd by a few miracles, wrought by a person, who never was a witness to the truth of what he affirms, rather than by the innumerable miracles wrought by Christ himself, and his apostles after him? This would be altogether as unreasonable, as if any one should reject the history of *Julius Caesar* as a fiction, tho' he had the writings of *Caesar* himself, and the concurrent testimony of all the ancient *Roman* authors; and yet at last be convinced upon the single authority of a modern author. But supposing they should be convinced; have not others the same reason

to expect the same satisfaction with themselves ? And is not God under the same obligation to give it to all, as to one ? If so, 'twill follow that there is need of a perpetual course of miracles, to the end of the world, to keep up the credit and authority of Christianity. And even this would effectually destroy the very design, pretended to be answered by it. For miracles being thus made cheap and common, would cease to be wonderful and surprizing, and so have no power to convince and persuade men ; no more effect on them than the rising of the sun, or the fresh life and verdure of the spring ; which can be accounted for no other way, that I know of, but from the sole will and power of the creator.

It is no wonder, if, in such a number of ages, since the first appearance of Christianity in the world, there should arise some matters of difficulty and dispute concerning it, of which we may not be able to give an easy and satisfactory account. But then it ought to be considered, that this is not peculiar to Christianity, or to the books of the New Testament. In all ancient books, as they have been often transcribed, there will be of necessity various readings ; which must happen to the sacred

sacred writings as well as to any other, unless we can suppose that God was obliged to guide every transcriber's hand, or take care that no errors should come out from the press. The providence of God is abundantly vindicated, by taking care that no such errors shall happen, which may lead men into opinions and practices contrary to the end and design of the revelation given. As for other things of lesser consequence, where neither the interest of the divine government, nor the happiness of men are concerned; to assert it necessary that God should interpose to prevent any differences or disputes about them, is to affirm it necessary that God should interpose in a very extraordinary manner, tho' there be no extraordinary occasion to require it. The great end of a revelation from God undoubtedly can only be, to acquaint men with his will in reference to their duty, and to encourage them by proper motives to perform it; that so they may obtain his favour, and secure their own happiness. And therefore all the objections formed against the sacred books upon account of the differences, which may be found in the several copies we have of them, will appear to be of no force to prove

prove them not written by a divine authority and influence, till it can be proved that the original design of them is hereby quite obscured, and that therefore they are insufficient to make men virtuous and happy. Indeed till this be made out, the objection carries in it this manifest contradiction; that the scriptures cannot be from God, because there is in them such a number of various readings, which render them insufficient to accomplish that great end, for which they are abundant-ly sufficient.

And as to all histories of ancient date, there will also arise difficulties, either with respect to the chronology, facts, references to customs, which, at this distance of time, we may not easily account for; whilst nevertheless, with the greatest reason, we believe the histories in general to be true, and the authors of them to have been men of integrity and credit. And if this be no objection, with any man of common understanding and security, against his believing the history of all the best times; why should the same difficulties, attending christianity, prejudice any person from receiving it? Since they require no new proof for the truth of ancient facts in other cases, but what they have from the
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concurrent testimony of antient writers ; and scruple not to believe particular histories, tho' in some parts very liable to just exceptions ; if the testimony in favour of Christianity be as strong and full, there will be, notwithstanding all the difficulties that attend it, the same reason for believing it, and no need of any further proofs to confirm it, and therefore as farther miracles are in themselves needless, 'tis unreasonable in such a case to expect them.

The only end therefore and use of miracles that I can think of, when wrought by the assistance of God, or good spirits in subjection to him, seems to be this ; to confirm that person's mission from God, who comes in his name, and by his authority, and hath a revelation of his will to impart to men : and 'tis reasonable to think that God will interpose, and give an extraordinary assistance to his servants, where 'tis necessary to convince men of their mission from him, and in order to secure good greater credit to the message they deliver in his name. No considerate person can imagine, that God will send a special messenger from himself, but on cases of very great importance and necessity ; and when ever

sees fit to do it, we may be assured he will
 enable him to support the character with
 which he hath honoured him, by giving him
 such credentials, as shall be a sufficient proof
 of his divine instruction and authority. Now
 'tis evident that the most excellent doctrines
 and precepts, that can be delivered, would
 not in themselves be a proper evidence of
 any person's mission from God; because
 possibly his own reasonable powers and fa-
 culties might have been sufficient for the
 discovery of these things: and therefore 'tis
 necessary he should have farther proof to ap-
 peal to; even such works, in which it may
 evidently appear, to all impartial enquirers,
 that he acts under a superior power and influ-
 ence; such works in which, either the hand
 of God himself may be discovered, or at least
 the ministration of good beings under him.
 For whatever miracles can be proved to
 be done, either by the immediate interposi-
 tion of God himself, or by the agency of
 good spirits; this will be a certain proof, that
 the person who doth them, ought to be re-
 garded as a messenger from God. For tho'
 false prophets may do real miracles, to jus-
 tify false pretensions, by the assistance of su-
 perior evil spirits; and tho' there doth not
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appear any sufficient reason to think, that God is always obliged to suspend those powers he hath given them, or hinder their doing many wonderful works, for the support of their own interest and authority; yet 'tis not reconcileable with any of the divine perfections, to imagine that God himself will actually support false pretensions, or exert his own power for the confirmation of a lye. Nor will any wise and good spirits be instrumental to support, and propagate a real imposture, or concur with a wicked man in perswading others to believe, that he hath that authority from God, which he actually hath not; for this would destroy the supposition of their being wise or good.

But it may be asked, what need is there of miracles for this end? Or why should God interpose in this extraordinary manner, when the same end may be answered without it? Is not the difference between truth and falsehood, good and evil, virtue and vice, easily discoverable without a miracle to inform us, or any divine interposition to discover these things to us?

I answer, that it must be acknowledged there have been some, who, by the meer light of nature, have made noble discoveries with re-

ference to God, and moral goodness. The writings of *Cicero*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and others, abound with the noblest sentiments and rules, and shew the vast reach, and excellent tendency of our reasonable powers, when they are carefully exercised and improved. But could there be more of these instances produced than there can, it would not in the least disprove the expediency, not to say the necessity of revelation.

'Tis however evident, that the number of such persons hath been always very few. One or two in an age seem to be the most, that meer nature could ever form, or raise up; and therefore it must be proved, either that these few were capable and willing to instruct and reform the world; or else that the generality of mankind, throughout all ages of the world, have needed no information and instruction, before any reasonable objections can be urged against the necessity of a revelation, supported by proper proofs.

To affirm that there never hath been time, when mankind have needed instruction and reformation, and of consequence when a revelation from God would

have been highly useful, and conducive to the general welfare, would be to contradict the most authentick and antient histories. If we consider the account given, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, by the *New Testament* writers, as bare historians only; they appear to have been in the most deplorable circumstances of ignorance and vice. Thus *St. Paul* represents the *Gentiles* in general, as persons who knew not God, neither were thankful; who changed the glory of the uncorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four footed beasts, and creeping things, who changed the truth of God into a lye, and worshipped and served the creature more than the eternal blessed Creator; and who were therefore given up of God to uncleanness, and to vile Affections; Rom. i. 21. &c. And in another place he speaks of them, persons dead in trespasses and wherein, in times past, they walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience; as having the

*conversation in the lusts of the flesh, and
 fulfilling the desires of the fleshly mind ;
 and of consequence as children of wrath,
 without hope, and without God in the world,*
 Eph. ii. 2, 3. &c. This is a plain histo-
 rical account of the then circumstances of
 the heathen world : and this account is con-
 firmed by the best writers amongst them-
 selves ; who are full of the gross idolatry,
 and horrid vices which too universally
 prevailed amongst mankind. And as to
 the *Jews*, who boasted of their sacred ora-
 cles ; how strangely degenerated were
 they from the faith and piety of their
 ancestors : With what enormous crimes
 did our Saviour reproach them ? as an
hypocritical adulterous generation ; Mat.
xii. 39. as teaching the commandments
of men for doctrines of God ; Mat. xv.
9. as transgressing the commandments of
God, and making them of none effect by
their tradition ; v. 3. 6. as blind leaders
of the blind ; v. 14. as devourers of
widows houses, making long prayers
thro' a pretence of extraordinary piety ;
as paying tythe of mint, anise and cum-
min, but omitting the weightier mat-
ters of the law, judgment, mercy, and
faith ;

faith; as full of extortion and excess and of all hypocrisy and iniquity; Mat. xxiii. throughout. This was the character of their priests and teachers : and how miserable therefore must the condition of the people be, who were under such hypocritical and abandoned guides? And this account is agreeable to that given of them by *Josephus*, a writer and countryman of their own ; who represents them as a most wicked and detestable generation, who would have been consumed by the special vengeance of God had they not been destroyed by the *Roman* army. So true was that representation of *St. Paul* : *All, both Jews and Gentiles, have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Rom. iii. 23.*

Now I would ask any considerate person, whether or no, in such an universal degeneracy and deep ignorance, supposing the being and providence of a God, would it not have been highly worthy of the supream wisdom and goodness, to have interposed to recover men to the knowledge of those truths, which had been so long and so intirely lost ; and to the practice of that virtue and goodness from which

cess there was so total an apostacy? Is it
 Mat reasonable to think, that the Father of
 acter men could view these wretched circum-
 how stances of his own offspring without a
 ition tender compassion of their case? Or can
 such we suppose that the divine mercy would
 And withhold the necessary relief; or that, if
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 coun effectually recover men as a revela-
 sent tion from himself, it should be incon-
 stable sistent with the divine wisdom, and
 con unnecessary on the part of men, for God
 God to grant it? And can we imagine that
 e Ro any messenger would have been more
 resent proper to reveal the will of God to men,
 s and than a man like themselves? Or that any
 shor more effectual method could have been
 thought of, to awaken them out of their
 e per stupidity, than that a man should boldly
 iverla proclaim himself the messenger of God,
 suppo ent by him to reform and save the
 a Go world; leading himself the most exem-
 thy plary life, loudly calling men to repen-
 o hav tance, preaching up the doctrine of *one*
 know God, and the *worship of him in spirit*
 so lon and *truth*; encouraging the hopes of
 practi those who should believe in and obey
 whic him, and awakning the fears of others
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by denouncing the wrath of God against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; and as the proof of his divine mission, raising the dead, curing the diseased, restoring sight to the blind, and limbs to the maimed, creating bread for the hungry, calming the winds, stilling the waves and tumults of the sea, casting out devils, prophecying of his own death, and of his glorious resurrection which should immediately ensue? Would not all that beheld him stand astonished at such a teacher, and such mighty works? And would not such an inference as this be very just, *This man could do nothing unless God were with him?*

That no person, but one thus instructed and furnished of God, was capable of reforming the world under the circumstances in which it lay, at our Saviour's appearance, is I think almost demonstrable: and if so, the necessity of a revelation at that juncture will appear; and of consequence the necessity of miracles, to give the greater credit and authority to him who was to bring that revelation.

For instance; who could, with any hope of success, have undertaken the work of converting the heathen world from their idolatry and vice? 'Tis true the wiser of them contemned the gods the generality adored, and saw the absurdity of the religious worship offer'd to them. But still they knew not how to prevent what, with justice, they so often ridiculed. They did indeed, now and then, reason well in their writings. But with what guard and caution, lest they should become suspected by the people, and charged with contempt of the Gods their country worshipped? And how meanly did they comply with the prevailing superstitions of the time, and countenance the general impiety by their own example? Herein even *Cicero*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and others of the most eminent heathens, were exceeding criminal; and therefore, with all their excellencies, were every way unfit to become the teachers and reformers of others.

Besides, where can we find, in all the writings of these men, any one plain uniform consistent scheme of things? When they speak of the being of a

God, the immortality of the soul, and a future world of rewards and punishments, doctrines of the greatest importance ; do they speak of them with full assurance themselves, or give any convincing proofs of the truth of them to others ? In one dispute they seem to allow that these things are highly probable ; in the next they hesitate, retract and deny. Had they therefore designed their writings for the benefit of others, how could their real sentiments be understood ; how could men have been assured which was their last prevailing opinion ? They wrote indeed like men at a loss, and in very great uncertainty. And indeed how should they do otherwise, when many of the divine perfections, the most acceptable method of worshipping God, and the state and circumstances of a future world, cannot possibly be known but by a revelation from God ?

But now supposing that there were none of these defects in the writings of these great men, but that they contained an uniform scheme of truth, and a perfect system of morals ; yet still they would

would have been unfit for reforming the world, and incapable of accomplishing the necessary work. For all who know any thing of mankind, know, that there are but few capable of abstracted reasonings, and that bare lectures of morality and virtue are likely to have but little success, unless attended with proper motives and encouragements. Now herein all the writings of the pagan philosophers were exceeding deficient. *Cotta* and *Balbus* might dispute for ever *de natura deorum*, and yet not make one convert from Idolatry: and *Cicero* might write like an Angel *de finibus bonorum & malorum*, and quote the authorities of the wisest Sages of Greece; and yet, if he had no better motive to urge to a pre-judiced ignorant vitious multitude, remain without influence or success. Vices long established, universally practised, from encouraged by the examples of supposed deities, and sanctified even by the solemnities of religious worship, were not to be restrained or cured by the authority or writings of one or two private philosophers, who taught better than they lived, and prevented the good effects

effects their best precepts might have had, by shewing too little regard to them in their own behaviour. I could wish one of our modern *Deists* would make the experiment ; let him draw up a consistent scheme of natural truths, and make the most perfect collection of moral duties from *Cicero* and *Seneca*, and if he pleases, from the *gospels* of *Jesus Christ*, and the *Epistles* of *Paul*, and travel into the *Indies* or *Africa*, and spread them among the nations inhabiting those countries, and try what harvest he can make amongst them, upon this foundation. The reclaiming of those ignorant people from their miserable circumstances, the instilling into them better notions of God, and just sentiments of morality and virtue, would really be a very charitable undertaking, and unquestionably acceptable to the Deity. If they find any tolerable success, without pretending to a divine mission, and working any miracles amongst them, they would reform ; I should then begin to question the necessity of a divine revelation ; and of consequence of those miracles, which, as yet, seem to me necessary to the proof of it.

I may be thought possibly to be in
 haste in making such a proposal, and I be-
 lieve I shall find no one very ready to
 comply with it. 'Tis however I think ab-
 solutely necessary, either that some one
 or other of them should do this, or that
 they should produce an instance of some
 universal alteration made in the religious
 sentiments and practices of mankind,
 without any pretence to miracles, or di-
 vine inspiration, in order to render the
 opposition possible. Nothing certainly
 appears more incredible or unlikely; and
 I am apt to think, that no considerate
 person will easily believe it, 'till some in-
 stance or other of the like nature can be
 produced, or the tempers of men be-
 come exceedingly altered. It is well
 known that the *ancient lawgivers*, and
 amongst the *Greeks and Romans*, thought
 it necessary, to secure a due obedience
 to their laws, to pretend they receiv-
 ed them by *inspiration from the Gods*.
 The *Jewish republick* owned its rise
 entirely to, at least, the supposed au-
 thority of *God*; and it was this which
 made the *apostles* of *Christ* so abund-
 antly

dantly successful, because they declared themselves, and were believed by others *to be the messengers of God*. Nor was *Mahomet* wanting in this pretence : who styled himself *the apostle of God* ; who because he could perform no miracles took another method to support the character he had usurped, *viz.* by sheathing his sword in the bowels of those who would not receive him as such.

Since therefore all the remarkable changes, as to religion and manners that have ever been made in the world have been introduced and managed by the pretence to, and claim of a divine authority, in the great authors of them and since it doth not, in the nature of the thing, seem probable, that mankind should, in any age of the world, be recovered from a state of universal degeneracy and ignorance, to a better state of knowledge and virtue, but under the influence of this perswasion, that the persons endeavouring to reform them act in the name of, and by warrant from God, or a revelation from God, supported by miracles, or other proper proofs, with

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appear highly necessary, if it can be shewn that mankind ever have been in such a state of universal degeneracy and ignorance. It is an act worthy the supreme goodness to save men from such deplorable circumstances, and becoming the infinite wisdom of God to interpose by his own authority, the more effectually to accomplish it.

I do not see how this reasoning can be shewn to be inconclusive, but by urging, what I think may be retorted on the objectors, with great advantage, *viz*, that God might reveal himself to every particular person; and that this would be a more certain means of reforming men, and entirely supersede the use and necessity of miracles. 'Tis allowed that God might do so, if he had pleased. But then this would have been to treat men, not as reasonable beings, or inferior agents; and would have made their knowledge and virtue as necessary in the shape of their bodies, or features of their face: *i. e.* 'tis to suppose that God must have acted in a manner, not suitable to the state and circumstances of his
his

his creatures, but contrary to the reason and nature of things. For as mankind are made capable of judging and determining for themselves ; reason teaches us, that their religion and virtue should not be from an overruling necessity or constraint, but the result of an impartial enquiry, and free choice. But beside this supposition, if it may be thought to remove one difficulty, yet manifestly substitutes a greater in its room. For, which is the most probable supposition ; that God should, upon some very extraordinary occasion, when there was need of his immediate interposition, go a little out of the common course of things, to answer a very wise and gracious design ; or that he should continually supersede, and act contrary to those laws, which are of his own establishing ? That God should be continually making a new revelation of himself to every man, tho' there was no real necessity for it, is certainly more extraordinary and incredible, than that he should do it upon special occasions, when the general benefit of mankind requires it, and might be effectually secured by

And therefore an exception against the necessity and use of miracles, as I have stated it, which implies the necessity of a much greater miracle in the room of it, is contrary to the laws of just reasoning, and without any advantage to the objectors.





CHAP. III.

Containing the Rules of judging by whom Miracles are performed.

SINCE, as hath been already shewn, all miracles done by men are performed, either by the assistance of God himself, or, which is the same thing, the ministration of his angels; or by evil spirits engaged in an opposite interest to God, and for purposes contrary to his will. Our next enquiry is, how we may distinguish one from the other; or satisfy our selves when miracles are done by God and good spirits, or by evil spirits in opposition to him. And here

I. There are several rules we have to judge by, which respect the works themselves pretended to be done. As that the things be in themselves possible; since no power whatsoever can effect that which is strictly impossible. And therefore we may be sure, that an impossibility, or what implies a real contradiction, represented as a miracle, and for the proof of which recourse is had to the divine power, never was, or can be effected; and therefore *transubstantiation*, the standing miracle of the *church* of *Rome*, already a falsity and imposture; and so far from being a proof of the infallibility of that *church*, that it's asserting this monstrous doctrine is a demonstration of its being a very erroneous one.

'Tis also necessary, that the things be probable as well as possible; that they do not carry along with them the appearance of romance and fable, which would, unavoidably, very much prejudice men against believing them. For it doth not seem all likely, that God would make use of means incredible, to confirm the truth; or that he would go too far out

of the course of nature, to support a character which might be more effectually supported another way. And therefore some of the few miracles, pretended to be wrought by *Mahomet*, viz. his *splitting of the moon*, and his *wonderful journey to heaven*; and others which *Philostratus* relates of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, in his life, viz. that *vessels of wine and water, tables, cups, and dishes, placed themselves in order, for his entertainment among the Indians* that he *understood the language of birds* that he *conversed with the ghost of Achilles, and the like*, look at first view like dreams and fables; and have no pretence to be believed. Indeed the very telling such stories is enough to confute the truth of them.

But what is principally to be regarded on this head is; that the things pretended to be done be such, as that 'tis consistent with the perfections of God to interest himself in; and with his character, as governor of the world, to do; that they be such, as plainly discover somewhat of the mighty power, which necessarily belongs to the eternal being; not such as lo

like the little tricks and cunning deceits of artful impostors. Of this latter sort are many of the pretended miracles of the church of Rome; the *liquefaction* of St. Januarius's blood; the *sweating and bowing* of the image of the Virgin Mary, and the like; things too mean to require the interposition of the Almighty's power, and which look like nothing but the tricks and rogueries of wicked and deceitful priests. Again, they must be such as are agreeable to the notions we have of the perfection of the divine wisdom; things that do not carry with them an air of ambiguity, and are not liable to just suspicion and exception. For, as God can do whatever he pleaseth; so we have reason to think, that he, who is *infinite in understanding*, will give his messengers such credentials, as shall be certain and solid. And therefore we may be assured, that the *heathen* oracles, which were generally delivered in very ambiguous terms, in words that had a double meaning, or no certain determinate sense, and which would answer the event which may ever it should happen, were not

from him, *to whom all things are naked and open*; but proceeded, either from the priests, who could not foresee the event or from evil and deluding spirits, who could not secure it. Again, they must be such things as answer to the character of God, as a good and gracious being. For tho', sometimes, he may see proper to punish an obstinate rebellious people by *terrible things in righteousness*, whom the most miraculous instances of goodness will not soften into obedience; yet it seems reasonable to believe, that whenever the first and best of beings is pleased to send an extraordinary messenger with a revelation of his will, he will furnish him with such proofs of his mission as may argue, not only the power of him in whose name he comes, but his love to men, and his inclination to do them good. And therefore we may be assured, that such, who would sanctify methods of cruelty and persecution, by pretences to a divine warrant and command, act not by commission from him who is the *father of mercies*, but by the instigation of that wisdom which is *earthly, sensual, and devilish*.

And in order that the proof may be yet more convincing, 'tis necessary that the things pretended to be miracles, be done openly, in the eye of the world, and before many and proper witnesses; with that manifest sincerity, openness, and freedom which becomes a good man, and one acting by authority from God. As such a one can have no imposture to support, he can have no discovery to fear. The very reason of his doing miracles is, that others may be witnesses to them: and he is therefore willing that his works may be tried, and that the strictest scrutiny may be made into them; that others being convinced there is no fraud, may submit to the evidence of them. It is a bad sign, when persons so act as if they were suspicious of themselves, and afraid of a discovery; when they choose to do their wonders, either with as much secrecy as they can, or in the presence of but few witnesses, or those who are ignorant and unlearned, and not so very able and likely to discover and find out the imposture.

And as they ought to be performed in the most open and publick manner;

so the more they are in number, of the greater force and evidence they will appear. One single action, tho' never so wonderful, would have but very little influence. Those who were witnesses to it, tho' they might at first be surprized at the unusual event, yet when the surprize was gone off, would give but little credit to such pretensions to a divine authority, which had no stronger proofs to support it. And as for others; they would either question the truth of the fact, or ascribe it to chance or fraud, or, indeed, to any thing rather than a supernatural assistance. In order to make any revelation of general use, and procure it universal reception, 'tis necessary that the first proofs of its being from God should be strong and evident, such as may be notorious and generally known; and that therefore the messengers of God, upon all important occasions, should have an abiding power with them of doing such wonderful works, as may argue the continuance of a divine influence; that none may be without sufficient evidence, or want proper proofs to convince them, that their mission and authority is from God.

And the proof from hence will be yet more convincing, if such persons have not only themselves a continued power of doing wonderful works, but also of enabling others to do the same, in confirmation of the same end. This will be a means of spreading the revelation itself farther, and making the proof of its divine original, more convincing and extensive. By this it will appear plain, that they are not done by collusion, or slight of hand; but by the interposition of some superior power, which continues to assist and support those that do them. And if such works are performed, not only for a few years, but for a great number successively, by different persons engaged in the same interest, and in support of the same scheme of principles; this will be the strongest possible proof of its truth to those who are witnesses to the facts themselves, and a sufficient reason for all others to believe it in succeeding ages. Provided.

In the last place, that there be such a testimony to these facts, as is sufficient to prove the truth of them, or to render very probable that they were actually

performed. That past facts are capable of solid proof, I may take for granted will not be denied ; and therefore the the miracles wrought in favour of Christianity, if they were actually performed are capable of this proof as well as other things. And of consequence, if they are attended with an equal certainty, or probability, as other past facts, which the most cautious persons do firmly believe ; the history of them will stand upon the same footing of evidence, and equally deserve our credit. If, indeed there be not sufficient proof that the miracles, we Christians affirm have been wrought in confirmation of the divine mission of Jesus Christ, ever were performed ; I must confess my self ready prepared to fall in with the next scheme that any of our modern deists can offer which shall appear more worthy my belief and to be supported with better proof than the religion of the gospel. But

II. There are some marks which respect the persons themselves, pretending to a divine authority and mission. seems a necessary part of their character

that they should be in the full exercise
 of their reason and senses ; since no man
 will think himself obliged to pay much
 regard to the dreams and visions of per-
 sons disordered in their brains, or who ap-
 pear to be under the power of enthusiasm
 and melancholy : and there is no reason
 to believe, that God should make choice of
 madmen to deliver to the world the words
 of sobriety and truth. 'Tis necessary also,
 that they should generally appear to be
 honest and good men, such as fear God,
 and have a good report for their unblame-
 able and virtuous conversation. For, as the
 end of every revelation that comes from
 God, must be to establish the practice of vir-
 tue and true goodness ; one cannot think,
 that in order to bring about such a design,
 he would make choice of persons who
 themselves contradicted it in their own
 behaviour. Others would argue from
 such mens practice, that they did not be-
 lieve the instructions they gave, and that
 therefore they were not worthy any regard.
 I may add, under this head, that whoever
 would support the character of a prophet
 must be constant and uniform to himself,
 not

not perpetually varying his messages, or altering his doctrines, now forbidding what he once allowed, then allowing what he once forbad ; but that there must be an exact harmony and agreement in every thing he delivers, let it be at ever so great a distance of time, or upon ever so extraordinary an emergence. For since the supreme being cannot but be conscious of his own perfections and will, and understands the true interest and happiness of his creatures ; 'tis as evident that no person instructed of God can deliver opposite and contradictory messages, as that God cannot contradict himself, or be ignorant of his own purposes and resolutions. Hence we may learn what to judge of the pretensions of *Mahomet* to divine inspiration, whose messages to his followers were shaped and varied according to the different circumstances of his affairs, or the opposite ends he had to answer ; an evident proof that he acted not under his influence, who is *infinite in understanding*, but was a real impostor, pretending to an inspiration he had not ; as not being able either

to foresee; or provide against future events.
I proceed

III. Next, to enquire what are those particular ends, for which miracles must be wrought, in order to prove the interposition of the divine power, or the ministration of good spirits under God. That real wonders may be done by evil spirits, of natures superior to us, in opposition to the divine authority and government, I think I have already proved both from reason and scripture: And therefore, the most proper and sure way to judge of any miracles perform'd, and to discover to whose power and influence they ought to be ascribed, is to examine what purposes are intended to be answered by them, or what doctrines and precepts they are wrought to confirm: because no reasonable being can be supposed steadily to pursue an interest opposite to his own, or willingly to lend his assistance to support an authority which must prove the destruction of his own influence and power.

It is therefore certain, that no miracle whatsoever, wrought in opposition to the

the principles of true reason, and natural religion, can be from God. There can be no greater impossibility in nature, than for the supreme being to commission any person to teach and persuade others that he doth not exist ; or that there is no providence, or future state ; or that there is no obligation to piety, justice, charity, and the government of our own passions. That God is, is as demonstrable as that we are. And since we have existence there are certain duties which naturally and necessarily result from our condition as creatures, and fellow creatures ; the obligation of which doth not depend on the arbitrary will of God, but is founded on the reason and nature of things, and therefore can never cease, 'till we ourselves cease to be, or at least become other creatures than we now are. And therefore we cannot be more sure of any thing than that no person, whose real design is to weaken the belief of these truths, or destroy the obligation of these duties, let his coming be with ever so many signs and wonders, and miracles, can be the messenger of God.

Nor are his pretensions to a divine mission to be allowed, who would introduce a false object, or method of worship, the worship of more Gods than one, or such a method of worship, as is unsuitable to the nature and perfections of the one true God. For since 'tis demonstrable that the supreme being is but one; that worship, which is due to him, is founded on reasons which are peculiar and can belong to none but himself, who alone is the eternal, underived, independent one, the all-wise Creator, and preserver of all things, and therefore the greatest and best, of all beings: and therefore he cannot act by warrant from God, who would persuade men to transfer this worship to any other beings whatsoever. Supposing then, that all the miracles which *Damis* and *Philostratus* ascribe to *Apollonius*, were actually performed; yet will not all this secure him from the charge of imposture, because he every where taught the worship of many Gods, and therefore could not be sent by the one only living and true God. Nor can he be a messenger from heaven, who contradicts the proper design of

of any former revelation from God ; who either affirms of any preceding divine revelation, that God did not make it ; or who opposes the plain doctrines and real intention of such a revelation. God may indeed, at one season, appoint one particular method or form of external worship as it may be proper to answer some special ends, or as may be peculiarly agreeable to a particular age or people ; and at another season, as the circumstances of time and nations may alter, command the use of religious rites, that shall bear no resemblance to the former. This is agreeable to the wisdom of the supreme governor and doth not argue any defect or imperfection in him ; and therefore 'tis no reasonable objection against the character of any person, pretending to be sent of God (if other things answer) that he introduces a new method of external worship that he abrogates many rites which have been long in use, when the reason and design of them ceases ; and commands the use of others never practised before, which are very significant and instructive. But should he attempt to disprove the truth,

or doctrines of any former revelation which was really from God ; the very attempt would prove him a lyar, tho' he should perform never so many wonderful works, for his own support and vindication.

The proper design then, of every revelation that is really from God, must be, in short, this : to lead men into just and becoming sentiments of the divine being and perfections ; to direct and appoint that method of worship which will be acceptable to himself ; to recover men from their ignorance, to reform them from their vices, and to lead them into the practice of virtue and true goodness, by proper motives and arguments ; for the general welfare of societies, for every man's particular happiness in this life, and preparation for a better world hereafter. Such a design as this seems to be worthy of the all-wise and merciful governour of the world, and what we may expect from him who knows our infirmities, and wishes our happiness. And therefore, whenever the circumstances of mankind become such, as to need a particular interposition of his providence,

providence, for this end ; there is nothing in reason that forbids us to expect it ; no any thing in the nature of the case itself which should hinder him from granting it. But unless miracles are calculated to serve this end, they ought never to be acknowledged as any proof of a divine mission because we may certainly conclude, that God never will interpose in any case where there is no need ; or to bring about a design unworthy of himself.

It may here possibly be asked, Is this good reasoning, to prove the miracles to be wrought by God, by appealing to the doctrines, or end for which they are wrought and then to prove the doctrines, or justify the end, by an appeal to the miracles ? answer ; that the very doing of a miracle argues the interposition, or assistance of some superior agent ; and that the end, for which such a miracle is done, evidently discovers the nature and disposition of the being, by whose influence it is performed. The doctrines prove, not the assistance of superior power, but whether the assistance be given by a good or bad power : The miracles prove, not the goodness of the doctrine


nothing doctrine, but that he who preaches the
 ; no good doctrine so confirmed, acts by an au-
 e itse authority superiour to his own. They nei-
 ting her of them, separately, prove the divine
 o serv mission : but where they both concur,
 know they certainly prove this proposition ; that
 mission such a person acts by the authority of some
 e, tha superior, good, and powerful being ; or
 r case in other words, that his mission is agreed-
 g about le to the will of the Supreme : and there-
 fore, in order to such proof, they ought
 Is thi both to concur.





C H A P. IV.

The foregoing Marks applied to the Miracles of
C H R I S T.

 T now remains, that we consider how these characters and marks may be applied to the Christian revelation, to prove it to be from God. And inasmuch as all other circumstances signify nothing, 'till we have first evinced the truth of the facts, we affirm to have been done; I shall begin with shewing that we have sufficient evidence of the truth of the gospel history, and to believe all the facts there represented to be done by our Saviour and his apostles; that as an history, 'tis equally credible with any other, and stands upon the same

foot of evidence as all other past accounts do. Here I must observe, that it seems very reasonable to think there would be but little opposition made to the truth of our Saviour's history, as delivered by the writers of the *New Testament*, was it not that *Jesus Christ* pretends to a divine mission, and is declared to have proved it by many miracles. For I do not find, that any of our modern deists scruple to believe that the writings ascribed to that great *Indian* philosopher *Confucius*, were really his ; or that the *Alcoran* was, in great measure, dictated by *Mahomet*. As the former claims no inspiration, so the entire character of the latter abundantly proves him to have been an impostor ; and therefore the writings, said to be theirs, are received as such, without cavil or dispute : Not that there is any better evidence for this, than there is to believe the writings of the *New Testament* to be theirs, whose names they bear ; which have the very same concurrence of proof, as all antient books have, and against the genuineness of which no objections can be brought, but such as

will be of equal force against all others written in ancient times whatsoever.

For instance, should any one undertake to deny that the *Commentaries*, attributed to *Cæsar*, were his, and affirm that the accounts given of his victories and conquests are all fiction and romance ; by what arguments is such a one to be convinced ? To prove the truth by certain demonstration, none will, I suppose, attempt ; because past matters of fact are not, in their nature, capable of such proof. *Cæsar* himself is not now alive to attest the books to be of his own penning ; nor are there any, who lived in *Cæsar's* time, that give that satisfactory account of him, or his writings which is requisite. Some few there are who speak of him ; and they, but in very general terms, not mentioning many of the most considerable actions said to be done by him, nor reciting many of the books said to be written by him : and, as for those that do, possibly they might be his friends, and for some personal interest and view, become authors of the full books, too credulously ascribed to him. Or if *Cæsar* wrote them himself, I w

take upon me to deny the facts, and af-
 firm, that his battles were fought no-
 where but in his own brain, and that
 they were meer inventions to aggrandise
 himself; and to secure a lasting memory
 and glory. Perhaps I shall be told, that
 there are many authors, of undoubted cre-
 dit, who confirm these facts. I may
 however reply, that I have not the same
 opinion of them, and think them to be
 incompetent witnesses. Some of them li-
 ved near thirty or forty years after *Cæsar's*
 time, and so could not see the victories
 they ascribe to his valour and conduct;
 and they might all of them write, for any
 thing that can be proved to the contrary,
 not out of regard to truth, but for the sake
 of serving a particular interest and design.
 Besides, there are some errors in these
 books, as to matters of fact, some nar-
 ratives are evidently false, others appear
 to be fictitious, and about which learned
 men, all of them pretending to believe
 in, and admire *Cæsar*, cannot possibly
 agree. And indeed, supposing it could
 be fully proved, that *Cæsar* did write,
 heretofore, a book called his *Commenta-*

ries ; there are so many things interpolated, other passages omitted, and so many various readings in those copies which now go under his name, that 'tis impossible to distinguish what is really his, from that which is not genuine. 'Till these difficulties are cleared up, I must be allowed to give but little credit to the story of *Cæsar*, or the *Commentaries* that go under his name. I must confess these, and the like, are very large suppositions : but it will be a very hard matter for a deist, upon his own principles, to convince a man of such a temper ; or indeed, to prove the truth of any past facts whatsoever.

For this is really the case, as far as I can judge, of those who reject the Christian revelation ; their objections against the gospel history are founded upon such sort of suppositions, as I have now mentioned. Take the books of the *New Testament*, as a plain narrative of past events, and in this view I now only consider them ; and they are supported by the very same sort of proofs, that any other ancient writings,

are, or can be. That there was such a man as Jesus Christ, living in the *Jewish* nation, born when *Augustus Cæsar* was emperor, and crucified under the reign of *Tiberius*, is unanimously agreed on, by *Pagan, Jewish, and Christian* writers. 'Tis a fact never called into question by any ancient author whatsoever. The great question is, what sort of person this *Jesus* was. The accounts given of him by the writers of the *New Testament*, tho' they wrote in several places, and at the distance of many years, are entirely uniform. They all give the same plain narrative of his character, pretensions, doctrines, precepts, works. reception and end. They were almost all of them his contemporaries; and not only so, but some of them very intimately conversant with him, witnesses to the works they report he did, and who heard themselves the doctrines he delivered, and who declare that in their writings they spoke of nothing but *what their eyes saw, and their ears heard*; and to say all, who believed themselves under an absolute necessity, as they valued the favour of almighty

God, and their own eternal happiness, to deliver nothing but the truth. That they did write such books, none have attempted to disprove. We have, in confirmation of it, the testimony of those who lived with them, who either quote from them passages, no where to be found but in their writings, or else cite them expressly by name. Their testimony others, who came after them, have received ; and thus, from one to another it hath been conveyed down to us, by an uninterrupted tradition ; which is the very same reason, on which we believe that any other ancient writings are theirs to whom they are attributed.

There have been indeed several things, gospels and epistles, falsely ascribed to *Christ*, and his apostles ; which either have no sufficient proof for their support, or which evidently prove themselves to be a spurious and much later original. And possibly there may be some grounds for doubt, as to the authors, and time of writing, of one or two of the books of our present canon. But is this peculiar to the books of the *New Testament*. Or if this be a reason against others of them

them being genuine, will it not prove the same, in the case of every book, where the like objection can be fairly made? What then will become of some of the most celebrated and favourite authors, *Josephus*, *Virgil*, and many others who might be mentioned? some parts of whose writings lye under the very same uncertainty.

Besides, 'tis well worth considering, that one of the *New Testament* writers have never been convicted of forgery and imposture. General charges have been laid, and hard names given, but nothing fairly made out. The most inveterate adversaries of Christianity have never pretended to give us a truer, and more consistent history of *Christ*, than what we have in the *New Testament*; nor upon any scheme to account for his miracles, supposing him an impostor, as consistent with the nature of that religion he came to establish. Immediately after his death, his disciples and followers proclaimed, wherever they went, the wonders and miracles that were wrought by him, whilst living; and gave such an account of the reasons of his ignominious suffering, and death,

death, as, if true, was not only sufficient to wipe off the scandal of his cross, but to secure him an unperishable glory. If the accounts of the one and other were false; why did not the *Jews* give a public authentick account of the imposture of Jesus and his disciples; such a just description of the life and character, of the frauds and vices of him whom they crucified, and his followers whom they persecuted, as might have been a sufficient vindication of the justice and honour of their own nation, and have cleared them from the charge, of having shed righteous and innocent blood? This they ought to have done, not only in justice to themselves but for the sake of others; to preserve them from being deceived by the imposture and the more so, because the followers of Christ, not only spoke of these things but delivered them in writing to the world as the most certain truths, and sent these written accounts to the several churches they had gathered; and that even while many were living, who undoubtedly could have confronted their account, had it been false, and who had both craft and malice enough to have given us a true

they had been able. Their not doing this, when the Christians had neither power nor numbers to have destroyed the writings of their adversaries, give just reason to suspect, that they chose, rather to suffer the writings of the *New Testament* to pass without opposition, than to give a quite different account of things, which they were not able to support.

If there be any thing in these books, contrary to customs, chronology, persons, characters, or the like, that evidence them to be of a later writing than we Christians affirm ; let it be fairly made out. This will be an objection not easily got over. Or if there be any proof, that they were not written by those, whose names they bear, or any just exceptions against their honesty, integrity, and candour ; or if there was no concurrent testimony to the truth of what is asserted by the *New Testament* writers ; such objections will weigh with all considerate persons, and be some just ground of exception.

But, I do not find any material difficulties upon this head. The *Jewish* writers

writers themselves give us the same account of the state of their nation, as we find in our sacred books. The *Pharisees* and *Sadducees*, with their particular tenets, and superstitious customs, are represented by *Josephus*, much in the same manner, as they are by *Christ* and his apostles. As to their subjection to the *Roman* power, their several governors, the time of their being sent, and the like ; all authors, who speak of these things, confirm the truth of what the scriptures deliver concerning them. So that there is no charge, either of facts misplaced, or of persons and customs misrepresented, that can be brought against the scripture history, to render any part of it suspected, much less incredible.

As to the character of *Christ* and his apostles ; there is nothing to be found to render it a thing improbable, that they should be sent of God ; no opposition between their doctrines and lives ; no tokens of fraud or juggle, that can give the least ground for any to imagine them wicked and designing men. That they did many wonderful works, in order to prove themselves

selves the messengers of God, their very
 adversaries have been forced to acknow-
 ledge ; tho', out of hatred to their per-
 sons and doctrines, they maliciously as-
 cribed them to the assistance of evil spi-
 rits, as the *New Testament* writers in-
 form us : which account we have the
 more reason to believe, because the same
 charge hath been brought against them
 by other authors. *Celsus* quoted by *Ori-*
gen, when pressed with the argument
 of our Saviour's miracles, doth not un-
 dertake to deny the facts ; but accounts
 for them, by pretending, that *he went*
into Egypt, and there learnt the art of
doing wonderful works. Φησὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν
 κώτιον τραρέντα, μισθαρήσαντα, εἰν Αἴγυ-
 πτον, δυνάμεων τινων περαθέντα, ἐκεῖθεν
 πανελθεῖν, Θεὸν δὲ ἐκείνας τὰς δυνάμεις ἐαυ-
 τὸν ἀναγορεύοντα. *Celsus* apud *Orig.* p.
 10. And agreeable to this, he elsewhere
 saith, " that some of his followers under-
 stood magical arts, and had a power of
 doing wonders by the invocation of cer-
 tain spirits." Several also of the *Talmu-*
rick writers affirm, that Christ was well
 versed in magick : others ascribe his
 wonderful works to the art he had in
 pronoun-

pronouncing the name *Jehovah*, which he learnt in the temple, having once secretly, conveyed himself into the sanctuary, for this purpose. In a word, our Saviour's miracles were so well attested that the ancient *Jews* themselves could not deny the facts ; but, rather than acknowledge him as a prophet, on the account of them, imputed them to the most unlikely and ridiculous causes. Perhaps I should be thought over credulous should I mention *Josephus's* account of *Christ* : and I therefore forbear to insist on it, not that I think the passage can be proved spurious ; but because it would not lay any stress on matters which have been the subject of doubt and question.

But we have not only the testimony of the *Jews*, but of many other unexceptionable witnesses ; who, tho' born of *Gentile* parents, and educated in the religion of the heathens, yet, were fully convinced of the truth of the miracles wrought by *Christ*, and his apostles as that, upon the evidence of their being done, and the consideration of the design they were intended to support they

they embraced the religion he came to
 establish. I am aware that their evi-
 dence will be objected against, upon ac-
 count of their being Christians ; but with-
 out reason. For I would ask, were they
 Christians without conviction ? Did they
 forsake the religious customs they had
 been bred up in, and embrace Christiani-
 ty, without having, what they at least
 apprehended to be, a solid proof of the
 truth of it ? And was there any argu-
 ment that could have convinced them of
 the truth of Jesus Christ's pretensions,
 but a faithful, well attested account of
 his doctrines, life and miracles ? And is
 the testimony of persons convinced by such
 an account any thing the worse, merely
 because they apprehended the evidence
 to be irresistible, and therefore yielded to
 conviction ? This is to reject their testi-
 mony, for that which is the best reason
 the world to receive it, *viz.* their be-
 ing fully convinced that his miracles were
 real, and then acting agreeably to such a
 belief. We must not be put off here
 with this easy objection, that they were
 weak and credulous men ; as tho'
 every *pagan* and *infidel* must be a *very*
wise

wise and discerning person, merely
 account of his infidelity ; and every *Ch*
istian an *iedot* and *fool*, because co
 vinced of the truth of Christianity. Tho
 the early ages of the church, there we
 many weak and imprudent Christian
 as there are now many empty conceit
 infidels ; yet there were others who, b
 fides the advantage of good natural pa
 had been educated under the most ce
 brated philosophers, and brought up
 all the literature of those times ; and w
 were every way capable of discerni
 thè frauds and impostures of the first pr
 chers of the gospel, had there be
 any ; who yet saw the evidence for t
 truth of Christianity to be so strong,
 that they could not resist it ; but rat
 chose to sacrifice all that was valuable
 them in this world, and even life itse
 than renounce a religion which was atten
 ed with so many wonderful proofs of
 divine original. Had any one amon
 the heathens stood up in opposition
 Christianity, and openly professed hi
 self so fully convinced of its being
 imposture, that he would rather cho
 to dye than embrace it, and at l

ly, this confession of his infidelity with
 blood ; how would they have extol-
 his honesty, judgment, courage, and
 resolution ? and what mighty monu-
 ments of praise would they have erec-
 ted to his memory ; But, such is their
 impartiality, that tho' thousands
 have given their testimony in favour of
 Christ and his religion, and rather yield-
 ed to death, than to renounce him ; men
 engaged up in all the superstitious rites of
 idolatrous worship, and, who living when
 christianity began to spread, had all
 the opportunities in the world of disco-
 vering the weakness and defects of it ;
 this *cloud of witnesses* deserves no
 slight, and weighs nothing with those
 mighty masters of, and pretenders to rea-

but however, if the testimony of the
 confessed friends of Christianity signifies
 anything, we have some farther concur-
 rent proof, from the acknowledgment
 of its avowed adversaries. *Porphry*,
Crocus, and *Julian*, by calling our
 Saviour a magician, plainly own the
 wonderful works we ascribe to him. *Ju-*
 dith of him, Ἐπιστάμενοι ὅτι ἐν ἀνο-

ἥς ἄξιον εἰ μὴ τις οἶεσθαι τὲς κυλλὰς καὶ τυφλὰς
 ἰάσασθαι καὶ δαιμονῶντας ἐπορκίζειν ----
 τῶν μελίστων ἔργων εἶναι. Apud Cyril.
 191. *That he did nothing worthy of
 regard, unless you will account his heal-
 ing the lame and blind, and casting out
 devils, to be very extraordinary works.*
Hierocles also, another inveterate adver-
 sary to Christianity, not pretending to deny
 the facts of our Saviour's miracles, opposeth
 the wonders of *Apollonius Tyanæus*,
 equal and even superior to those of
 Christ. Thus he blames the Christians
 for their levity, in rejecting *Apol-
 lonius*, whilst at the same time, upon the
 account of some few wonderful things
 that Christ did, they owned, and wor-
 shipped him as God. Δι' ὁλίγας τερατείας
 νὰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν Θεὸν ἀνατορεῦσι. Apud Euseb.
 p. 512. And again, Σεμνῶντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν
 ὡς τυφλοῖς ἀναβλέψαι τε παραχόντα,
 τινὰ τοιαῦτα δρᾶσαντα θαυμάσια. I
 i. e. worshipping Jesus, because he made
 the blind to see, and did some other
 wonders. In the same strain they
 speak of the apostles. *Julian* saith of Paul
 τὸν πάντας πανταχῶς τὲς πρώτοις γόντας
 ἀπατεῶνας ὑπερβαλλόμενον Παῦλον. Apud

Pyrrillum, lib. 3. pag. 100. *That he did exceed all the other jugglers and cheats that ever were ; and the same charge they endeavour to fasten upon others of them. In a word, friends and adversaries agree in the facts, tho' they impute them to different causes : nor is there any one single testimony, from any approved ancient author, that can be produced by those, who deny the account we have in scripture of our Saviour's miracles, in support of their infidelity in this matter ; or which so much as tends to convict the New Testament writers of falshood and forgery. So that thus far they act a part inconsistent with themselves, as well as with common sense, who reject the history of the gospel, and yet believe the truth of other histories, which are supported by no other or better proofs.*

To this it may be objected by some, that they do believe the history of the *New Testament* writers, as far as 'tis credible, equally, and upon the same foot of evidence, as they believe the histories written by other persons, as far as they are credible, or worthy of belief : but that there may be

particular things recorded by historians, which, tho' they do not weaken the credit of the history in general, yet may be liable to very great exception, and unworthy the belief of any reasonable and inquisitive man. Thus there is great reason to believe the history of *Livy* in general to be true, because of the concurrent testimony of other *Roman* authors. But that, as *Livy* reports, *Acca* should speak; l. 3. c. 10. that it should rain flesh, and that the birds should immediately devour it. Ibid. That an infant, in its mother's womb should cry out, Io triumphe, and that a woman should be turned into a man at *Spole* tum, l. 24. c. 10. are things incredible in themselves, and not to be regarded by any but weak and superstitious persons. And thus, that there was such a man as *Jesus Christ*, who lived in *Augustus* Caesar's time, and did, and said a great many good things, they are very ready to own: But that he did the miracles recorded of him, they think very unlikely; and therefore disbelieve them, for the same reason that they do those mi-

acles

in t

acles recorded by other authors, because
in themselves incredible.

But in answer to this, let it be consider-
ed, that a thing is then only incredible,
either when the thing said to be done is
itself impossible, or when there can be no
reason assigned for the doing it. That
the miracles of Christ are not impossible;
very evident, upon the supposition of
their being done by God, or beings su-
perior to us, under him. And that they
were done for a very wise and valuable
end, is evident from the nature and
tendency of the gospel revelation, which
they were wrought to establish ; which
could not have been so well known to
have proceeded from God without them ;
which would not have been effectual
to reform and save men, unless attended
with sufficient proofs of its divine ori-
gin. I allow therefore, that our Sa-
viour's miracles would be perfectly in-
credible, was there no great and valuable
end to be answered by them. But as
they were wrought in confirmation of
the most excellent religion ; it appears
very likely of God to permit, and even
assist in the performance of them ; and

they are therefore so far from being incredible, that they are highly worthy our belief. The facts reported by *Livy*, are liable to very just exception, because there doth not appear any solid reason, why such extraordinary events should come to pass. But since the facts recorded in the *New Testament* are not liable to the same objection ; there is not the same reason for suspecting the truth of them. Besides, as to the extraordinary facts related by *Livy*, there doth not appear the concurrent testimony which is necessary to render them credible ; nor was he himself a witness to the things he reports. Whereas the persons who relate the miracles of our blessed Saviour, speak of nothing but *what they saw and heard*. And the same number of witnesses, who give us an account of the doctrine taught by *Christ*, unanimously concur in bearing testimony to his works. That there is, in reality, the same reason for believing that he did those works, as that he taught the doctrine ascribed to him. Whether these miracles were done by the power of magick, or by the finger of God, remains now

enquired into : or, which is the more probable account, that given us by *Julian, Hierocles*, and others ; or that which we have from the authors of the books of the *New Testament*.

Now here are two things, which at first view, render the account given in our sacred writings, the more probable.

I. That the penmen of them were more proper and competent judges, than those who gave the contrary account ; because they spake of things they were witnesses to, and therefore understood the manner, circumstances, and design of the facts they relate. It is true, that many of the *Jews*, who lived in our Saviour's time, and saw his miracles, said, *that he cast out devils by the power of devils* ; and imputed his wonderful works to a confederacy with evil spirits. But nothing is more evident, than that they had entertained the strongest possible prejudices against him ; because he answered not their expectations of a temporal deliverance, which they imagined the Messiah would have

wrought out for them, and reprove
 with a great deal of freedom, the hy-
 pocrify, ignorance, pride, avarice, and
 other vices, of the principal men of the
 nation, who had gained a mighty repu-
 tation for wisdom and sanctity. That
 he had all the characters and marks of
 a prophet, according to the descriptions
 of their own sacred writings ; that
 they admired, and were forced to ac-
 knowledge the excellency and truth of
 his doctrines ; tho' there were the same
 reasons for believing in him, as in any of
 the preceeding prophets, whom they
 received ; tho' he gave them the very
 proofs of his mission from God, which
 they demanded ; yet rather than own
 him in his proper character, they ascribed
 these proofs to the power of devils, and
 traduce him as an impostor and a
 seducer of the people. Had he been an
 flagitious impious man, they could easily
 have made it appear, and this would
 have rendered the account of his con-
 federacy with devils the more likely.
 Or had they imputed the miracles of the
 preceeding prophets to the same in-
 fluence, and equally rejected them ;

would have acted a consistent part. But to receive them as the messengers of God, upon the evidence of miracles they never saw, and yet to impute the much greater and more numerous miracles of Christ, to which they were witnesses, to the power of evil spirits ; discovers a mind very strongly prepossessed, and the great force and influence of prejudice. Besides the testimony of these persons is confronted by that of others, who appear to be altogether as credible witnesses. Thus we find, that the generality of those, who saw with what power Christ cast out devils, at the same time that the *Pharisees* imputed it to the assistance of the prince of devils, wondering, and frankly acknowledging, * *It was never seen in Israel, i. e.* " no prophet ever arose, who had so absolute a power over evil spirits as this man. " And in another place, after he had restored the blind and dumb to his sight and speech, when the *Pharisees* laid the same blasphemous charge, the people were amazed, and so far from thinking as the *Pharisees*

* Mat ix. 33.

risees did, that they immediately own him for their Messiah, saying, * *Is not this the son of David ?* A like acknowledgment was made him, upon his wonderful calming the raging wind and sea, *Of a truth thou art the son of God*. Thus also 'tis reported of great multitudes that when they saw the dumb speak, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind receiving sight, *They glorified the God of Israel* ; which surely they would not have done, had they thought that Christ was an impostor, or his cures performed by the power of devils. And even, as to the *Pharisees* and rulers themselves, the same records inform us, that many of them believed in *Christ*, but had not courage to acknowledge it, * || *for fear they should be put out of the Synagogue*. Some of them indeed, made a publick profession of their faith in him ; as *Nicodemus*, *Iairus*, || and others. So that the censures of *Scribes* and *Pharisees* are of no credit in this case ; because others of them, and indeed

* Mat. xii. 23. || Ibid. xiv. 33. † Ibid. xv. 3.
 * || Joh. xii. 42. || † Joh. iii. 2.

need the generality of the *Jewish* na-
 tion, believed him to be a prophet, on the
 account of his miracles; and would even
 have received him as the Messiah, had
 they not been prevented by the power
 and craft of their teachers and rulers.

But with much less reason still, can
Julian, and others, bring this
 charge against *Christ*, that he performed
 his miracles by the help of magick. If
 those, who were his contemporaries
 were not, with all their malice, able to
 support it; 'tis not to be imagined, that
 those, who came so long after him,
 should be furnished with better proofs of
 them. They themselves acknowledge many
 of the facts: and did they discern any
 thing of fraud, or any one circumstance,
 that might give just suspicion of impos-
 sure and magick art? If they allow
 the interposition of a superior power,
 as *Julian* doth; the best way to know,
 whether he be a good or bad one, is, not
 to rely on the bare testimony of friend
 or foe, but to consider the circumstances
 of the works themselves, the character
 of him that doth them, and the end in
 favour whereof they are wrought. Here
 then

then we joyn issue with our adversaries that Christ, and his apostles, in his name did heal the lame, and blind, and cast out devils, by their word; and farther that they could not have done this without the assistance of some supernatural good or evil being. But then, when one single circumstance is there, that should induce us to credit *Celsus*, and *Julian*, and others of that sort; who have a strong aversion to Christianity, and the author of it, is abundantly evident; rather than *Matthew* and *John*, and the other *New Testament* writers whose history of *Christ* appears to be a plain and artless narrative of things, they themselves both saw and heard? Have they after all their cavils, proved our Saviour in any part of his character, a bad man, a friend to vice, or an enemy to truth? If to recover men from the worship of many Gods, to the worship of the one only living and true God; if to secure the practice of moral duties, by the strongest motives; if to establish the belief of a providence, and the certainty of rewards and punishments, in another life, hath any tendency to promote an evil design, or can

possible way be subservient to the
rest of evil spirits ; I will then re-
confess, that *Christ* might be an
ostor, and his works performed by
influence of devils. And therefore,
the adversaries of Christianity can
duce some better witnesses, or circum-
stances, than they have yet done, to sup-
port such a charge, or can prove that
Christian religion hath not such a ten-
dency, or can reconcile this manifest con-
tradiction, of an evil spirit's constantly
pursuing a good end ; for any to ascribe
the wonderful works of *Christ*, to the
powers of magick, or confederacy with
devils, is, I cannot help thinking, an ar-
rangement of great credulity, or obstinate
prejudice. But then,

If the *New Testament* account of
Christ be true, his entire character will
be consistent, and of a piece ; if
full of the greatest possible con-
tradictions in nature. That a righteous
good man should be sent of God to re-
vive the world, that he should do many
wonderful works of goodness, to confirm
divine authority and mission ; that a
person

person should lead a sober, righteous and godly life, and teach others the practice of righteousness and virtue, by his own example and precepts, upon the principles of rewards and punishments in another life ; that he should be reproached and persecuted by bad men, and die in confirmation of his character and doctrines, with great confidence and trust in God ; and that a great deal of good should, by a wise and gracious providence, be brought out of this instance of wickedness and cruelty ; these are consistent suppositions, and very far from being incredible or unaccountable.

that a person should pretend to a mission from God, himself conscious, at the same time, that he really had none ; that in order to confirm such false pretensions, he should impose on the world tricks and artifices, known to be such, as genuine miracles, or perform them by a willing complicity with devils ; that in such circumstances he should himself lead an exemplary regular life, and steadily prosecute this great design, the good of men, and the honour of the supreme being ; that he should inculcate the necessity of univer-

goodness on others, and in particular the
 obligations of justice, honesty, and of
 every man's speaking the truth to his
 neighbour; that he should teach the do-
 ctrines of God's providence, of a future
 life, and of eternal rewards and punish-
 ments, as the consequence of mens acti-
 ons, according as they have been good
 or evil; that he should deny himself all
 those worldly advantages, which one
 would think it must be the great design
 of an imposture to secure, and willingly
 expose himself to death for the support
 of it, and at the same instant, when he
 is expiring upon such an account should
 commend God his father, and with the greatest
 assurance and ease, commend his depart-
 ing spirit into his hands; that a known,
 obstinate, hardened impostor, should
 thus live, and thus die, is one of the
 most monstrous and improbable supposi-
 tions in the world: and to believe these
 things; as all must do, who reject the
 christian religion, argues much greater
 weakness and forwardness of faith, than
 can be charged on any for their believing
 the doctrines of the gospel.

But

But not to insist on arguments of a general nature ; if we consider the whole behaviour of our blessed Lord, we shall not find one single mark of an imposture, or the least suspicion of a confederacy with devils.

1. As to the miracles affirmed to be done by him, none of them can be accounted all impossible, upon the supposition of the real assistance of a superior being. Whether or no angels, by their own natural powers, can effect the wonderful works ascribed to *Jesus Christ*, I know not, and will not pretend to determine. What degrees of power the great and wise Creator hath furnished them with, is to us a secret ; and therefore what effects they can, or cannot produce, we should not be over hasty to pronounce. In the scriptures of the *Old Testament* there are many instances which may naturally induce us to believe, that their power is very extraordinary, and that they can produce many effects, which would be as surprizing to us, and as much out of the common course of things, as the most, if not any of our Saviour's miracles.

But however, 'tis not material to
 our present argument, to determine in
 this case. Nothing is more certain, than
 that these things are not above the power
 of the first cause and supreme being.
 The same God, who first formed the eye,
 can restore the blind his sight ; he who
 brought the whole frame of our bodies,
 could as easily cure the maimed, and heal
 the diseased ; he who causes the rain to
 descend, and to water the earth, that
 may produce the various kinds of
 herbs and fruits, and minister bread to
 the eater, and seed to the sower, could
 be at a loss to change water into
 wine, or to multiply the loaves and
 feed the multitude. That the former effects are
 owing to the wisdom, power, and pro-
 vidence of God, no sober and considerate
 man will deny ; and therefore I think
 we must allow the possibility of his
 doing the latter.

Nor are these things only possible in
 themselves, but also very probable ; or
 as much as are fit for, and worthy of him,
 who is the greatest and best of beings,
 to do. If indeed we suppose that the

miracles of *Jesus Christ* were performed by the interposition and influence of evil spirits, they will appear extremely improbable ; nothing being more unsuitable to such a character, than that they should do, for so long a while, such numerous acts of beneficence, kindness and charity to men. But that God should have compassion on his creatures, and exercise his tender mercies over the works of his hands, is no more surprizing than that he should be infinitely good and wise. Indeed all the miracles recorded of our blessed Lord, and which he ascribes to the power and influence of his Father, are entirely agreeable to his known perfections. The raising the dead, and creating bread for the hungry, and limbs for the maimed, are works both of power and of mercy ; and therefore agreeable to the wisdom of the supreme governour ; since they naturally tend both to beget reverence in the minds of men towards his messenger, and reconcile them to the belief, and obedience of his will.

These works were done in the most open and publick manner. Thousand

re witnesses to the facts themselves ;
 in many of those, who could have dis-
 covered the imposture, had there been
 , and would have rejoiced at the op-
 tunity. I might mention many in-
 stances of this kind. Thus * he clean-
 sed the leper in the view of the multi-
 tude. He healed the centurion's servant,
 Peter's wife's mother, and calmed
 the tempest, before many † witnesses.
 He raised the ruler's daughter to life be-
 fore the whole company, that were pre-
 sent to attend her funeral || : He miracu-
 lously fed four thousand men, beside wo-
 men and children * || ; and at another time
 he wonderfully entertained five thou-
 sand at his table || †. In a word, so far
 as our blessed Lord, or his apostles,
 seem to have a desire of pri-
 vacy, that they chose the most publick
 places, in which to perform their won-
 derful works ; that so the greater num-
 ber might be witnesses to the truth and
 glory of them.

added to this, that they were as extra-
 ordinary for their number, as they were

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Mat. viii. 1. &c.
 Chap. 15.

|| † Ibid.

|| Chap. ix.

* † Mar. vi. 34 &c.

in their own nature ; and therefore manifested an abiding power in him who did them. One of his apostles tells *that many other things Jesus did*, besides those he had recorded of him *the which if they should be written every one, even the * world itself would not contain the books which should be written, i. e.* they were so very numerous, as that they would appear almost incredible ; and hence 'tis accounted by another, as that which renders the neglect of the gospel salvation exceeding dangerous in that it was *† confirmed with divers signs and wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost*. Had he done but very few extraordinary actions, there might have been some suspicion of fraud. But when almost every day and hour produced some fresh instances of power and goodness ; in works so powerfully wrought, and so frequently done, if they had been all cheat and jugglery, something of it must one time or other have appeared, and discovered itself for all times, and places, and companies.

* John xxi. 25.

† Heb. ii. 7.

ere alike to him, and wherever he came
 caused the multitude to marvel, and
 glorify God, *for that such things*
were done in Israel; and to acknowledge
 and believe in him, as the promised Mes-
 sh, because, * *when ever he should*
come, it was impossible he could do more
miracles than Jesus did.

And as for his disciples, they also had
 any of them the same power imparted
 them, of *casting out devils, and heal-*
ing all manner of sickness, and all man-
ner of disease, in the time of our Savi-
 or's ministration upon earth, men who,
 on account of their education, em-
 ployments, and natural parts, were the
 most unlikely persons in the world, ei-
 ther to be taught, or to practice magick
 arts; and who were of such different
 humours and passions, as that they could
 not have kept an imposture secret, nor
 stood so firmly together, as was ne-
 cessary to their carrying it on with any
 considerable success. One of them we
 saw deserted the cause, and treache-
 rously delivered up his master to the
 Jews. Now, as he had been witness

K 3

to

to our Saviour's works, why did he not publicly expose him, had he known them to have been no better than trick and juggles, or to have been performed by the invocation and assistance of evil spirits? This would have fully justified his conduct in delivering him up to the just resentments of an abused and injured people. But so far was it from that upon our Saviour's condemnation he returns the price of his treachery with this confession, * *I have betrayed innocent blood.* And notwithstanding the vehement accusations of the Jews of his being an impostor, and seducer of the people, *Pilate*, the *Roman* governor, declares publicly, that after having examined him, † *he finds no fault in him*, as touching the things whereof he was accused. Surely had he been so notorious a vile perverter of the people as they represented him, they might easily have fastened some probable circumstances of guilt on him, or his disciples to have given some tolerable face at their prosecution and condemnation.

* Mat. xxviii. 3, 4.

† Luke xxiii. 14.

m. But as they could not prove the
 charge of imposture on *Christ*, and his
 disciples, whilst he was with them ; so
 neither could they on them, after he was
 departed from them : who, soon after his
 resurrection, spoke, with the greatest free-
 dom, languages they had never studied or
 heard ; and, in the name of *Jesus*, cured
 the lame, and healed the sick, and raised
 the dead, and cast out devils ; which power,
 in greater or lesser degrees, continued many
 years in the Church. *Origen* against *Celsus*,
 speaking of the spirit of God, tells us,
 ἡ ἰχνη τῆς ἀγίας ἐκείνου πνεύματος ----- παρὰ
 ἡμετέροις σωζέσθαι. Ἐξεπάδυσσι δαίμονας καὶ
 πολλὰς ἰάσεις ἐπιτελεῖσι, καὶ ὁρῶσιν τινὰ κατὰ
 βέλημα τῆς λόγου περὶ μελλόντων. *Contra*
Jes. p. 34. i. c. “ Some footsteps of this
 holy spirit remain even to this day amongst
 Christians ; who cast out devils, and per-
 form many cures, and foresee some fu-
 ture events, according to the will of
Christ.” We have also the testimony of
Ambrosius to this purpose ; who speaks of
 the casting out of devils, and the healing of
 diseases by Christians, as a thing notorious
 and common ; *Quanti honesti viri, de vul-*
gariis enim non dicimus, aut a dæmoniis,

aut valetudinibus remediati sunt. Scap. in init. Vid. etiam Apologet. alibi.) “ and that not only as to the most common and ordinary sort of people, but those also of the higher and most honourable stations of life ;” the providence of God being pleased to continue this wonderful power, ’till Christianity was so fully established, as to need no farther proof to confirm it. Had the publick testimonies been false, they could easily have been confronted and disproved. So that as to the works themselves ascribed to *Christ*, there is no one circumstance that can reasonably induce us to think them performed by an impostor or magician.

2. Nor *secondly*, if we consider the character of *Christ* and his apostles, shall we have reason to think any otherwise, than that their works were real miracles, performed according to the wisdom and power of God. That they were in full possession of their reason and senses, the nature of their doctrines, the excellency of their precepts, their speeches, their apologies, in a word, that

whole conduct is an abundant proof. That they were good and holy men appears from every part of their history. They not only reprov'd others for their vices, but carefully avoided the same themselves, and were examples to all men of the virtues they recommended by their practice. The manifest design of their discourses and epistles is to recommend the fear of the supreme being, the love of justice and charity, and sobriety, and temperance in reference to our selves. And of these things they were patterns as well as preachers ; and had no secret vices ever fastened on them, to cause men to suspect, either their mission from God, or their own belief of the doctrines they taught.

Add to this, that there is an entire harmony and agreement between all the first publishers of Christianity, in every part of their scheme. *Christ* himself, during his ministration on earth, was in every thing consistent with himself ; never varying his doctrines, nor shaping his religion according to particular circumstances ; allowing no criminal liberties, or gratifying any of the sinful passions

passions of men, either to gain himself
 friends, or to proselyte them ; but taught
 one scheme of doctrine, virtue and good-
 ness, from the beginning to the end of
 his publick ministration, without regard to
 mens characters or persons, or consulting
 his own safety or ease. And after his
 death his apostles, tho' scattered in several
 nations, taught unanimously the same truths
 and established the same method and form
 of religion, wherever they came. What-
 ever opposition and difficulties they met
 with, they still continued firm to the
 principles of their great Master, and con-
 sistent with each other. Their argu-
 ments, their defences, their exhortations,
 their principles of action, their motives
 to virtue, the rewards and punishments
 they set before men, their behaviour to
 their enemies, and, in a word, their en-
 tire conduct, was always, and every where
 the same. They none of them
 set up for themselves, nor divided into
 parties, nor wrought counter miracles
 in opposition to each other ; but had all
 the same end in view, and every where
 prosecuted it by the same means. Shall
 it be said, that this was done by concert
 with

with each other? This will appear high-
 ly incredible ; because they travelled in-
 to the most distant countries, where they
 could not consult with each other upon
 any present emergence. Or shall it be
 said, that they received their instructi-
 ons from *Christ* before his death, and so
 executed their scheme before they parted
 from *Jerusalem*, and bound themselves
 to follow it wherever they came ? But is
 not the most unlikely thing in nature,
 in the supposition that they knew Christi-
 nity to be an imposture, that they could
 execute any one scheme which should suit all
 the circumstances of time and place,
 where they might happen to come ? Or,
 if they were wicked enough willingly to
 support a known imposture, what could
 so zealously attach them to the interest
 of *Christ*, after his crucifixion ? Why
 should they not rather assume the character
 of the Messiah, every one for himself ?
 Especially, since the name of *Christ* was
 every where hated, and evil spoken of ;
 and they were sure to have no other ad-
 vantage in this world by their adherence
 to him, but contempt, reproaches, per-
 secutions, and cruel death ; and because
 there

there was some possibility they might have a more favourable reception than he had ? at least, they were certain they could not have a worse ; no nor worse than they had all the reason in the world to expect, by continuing to preach in his name.

But however, supposing there was such a scheme laid, and such a firm combination between some of the apostles ; yet I would ask, how is St. *Paul's* conduct, his uniformity of principle and practice with theirs, to be accounted for ? He was once zealously attached to the *Jewish* Religion and in great reputation with their leading principal men. What were the motives of so wonderful a change ? Did he exchange the religion of his forefathers and all the circumstances of honour and plenty that attended the profession of it for a known imposture, merely for the shame and scandal, and persecutions that attended it ? Or was the change from some supernatural effect, or the fruit of real conviction ? How then came he instructed in magick arts, in common with the rest of the apostles ? Or was he an honest man when he became a convert

Christ

Christianity, and afterwards fell into all the vile measures of tricks and forgeries to support it? How came he so soon after this change, to have such a perfect understanding of the nature of Christianity, to be able to direct, settle, and establish churches, wherever he came? As for *Christ* himself, St. Paul never received any instructions from him in person, whilst he was on earth, having never seen him there. And as for his apostles, he protests, in the presence of God, that *he did not receive the gospel from them, nor was he taught it by them; that he did not go to Jerusalem, till three years after his conversion, and that then he knew but one of them, which was Peter; Gal. i. 12, 17, 18, 19.* If this be so; how shall we account for it, that in so many epistles, written at such different times, to such different people, and upon questions of so great difficulty and importance, not one single expression should appear contrary to the doctrines taught by *Christ*, or the nature of the religion intended to establish; and this before the history of our Saviour's life was published by any of the evangelists, or at least proba-

probably fallen into his hands ; and when he could not consult any of the apostles how to behave himself, or what instructions were most proper to be given to others ? How could there, in such circumstances, have been so exact and universal an agreement in doctrines, precepts, motives, and the like, between *Paul*, and the rest of the apostles, unless they all acted under the influence of one and the same infallible guide ?

Such was the real character of the persons employed to propagate the religion of *Jesus Christ* : a religion which deserved all their regards and cares, and for which 'twas worth their while to suffer shame and persecution ; a religion worthy to be first *publish'd by the Son of God* and confirm'd by signs and wonders, and miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. The great design of Christianity is to establish the belief of a God, and his providence, and a future state of rewards and punishments : to teach the spiritual nature of God, and the worship of the heart and spirit most acceptable to him : to recover men from their idolatry, and bring them

to the worship of the one only liv-
 and true God : to teach men their du-
 to each other, and oblige them, by the
 strongest motives, to observe and practice
 whatsoever things are true, and honest,
just, and pure, and lovely, and of
good report, and virtuous, and praise-
worthy ; and to perswade them to mor-
 every inordinate affection, and evil
 it within themselves, and to attain
 the excellent dispositions of mind, by
 which they may resemble God, be-
 the most useful in life, and be best
 prepared for future happiness : in a
 d, to establish the practice of these
 great duties, *the love of God, and*
love of our neighbour ; upon those
 excellent principles, of faith in God,
rewarder of those that seek him ;
 faith in *Jesus Christ*, as the Savi-
 and judge of men. This is the
 tendency of the gospel of *Christ* :
 of doctrines it requires us to believe are
 teach reasonable in themselves, and as far as I
 and the mind, generally plain and easy enough
 spirit to be understood : its precepts are found-
 recover the reason and nature of things, and
 ing the several relations we
 stand

stand in towards God and one another, and its promises suitable to his character, who is the greatest and best of beings, and able to inspire with hope and courage in the most difficult part of duty : all of these have this one main tendency to make men better in themselves, more useful to others, and more acceptable to God.

In its main principles it agrees with that former revelation, which God made of himself by *Moses*, and the succeeding prophets. It indeed supplies the defects, and abolisheth all that was ceremonial and typical in that imperfect dispensation. It carries the duties of men to a more nobler height, and establishes the practice of them by more solid and excellent motives. But as for its main doctrine relating to the nature and perfection of God, the character and undertaking of the Messiah, the preferableness of moral duties to ceremonial observances, vice being acceptable to God, and sin the object of his hatred and displeasure ; in these things, and the like, both testaments unanimously concur. So that as the internal evidence for Christianity is

ing ; so neither can there be any internal marks produced from its own nature and contexture, to prove it the invention of crafty and evil men, and not a revelation from God.

I will not pretend to answer for all the doctrines of Christianity, as they have been represented and laid down in particular schemes and systems of faith. I leave the authors of them, and the advocates in them defend, if they can, the truth, and their consistency with reason and scripture. When I speak of Christianity, I mean that venerable antient Christianity, which is so evidently contained in the writings of *Jesus* and his apostles ; Christianity in its native simplicity ; not as it hath been dressed, and adulterated by the jargon and cant language of fathers, school-divines, systematick and polemical divines, stretched or squeezed, in order to make it tally with a shorter or longer confession and creed. In this plight it does not appear so lovely and amiable as in its own native plainness, unadorned, and in those easy and familiar

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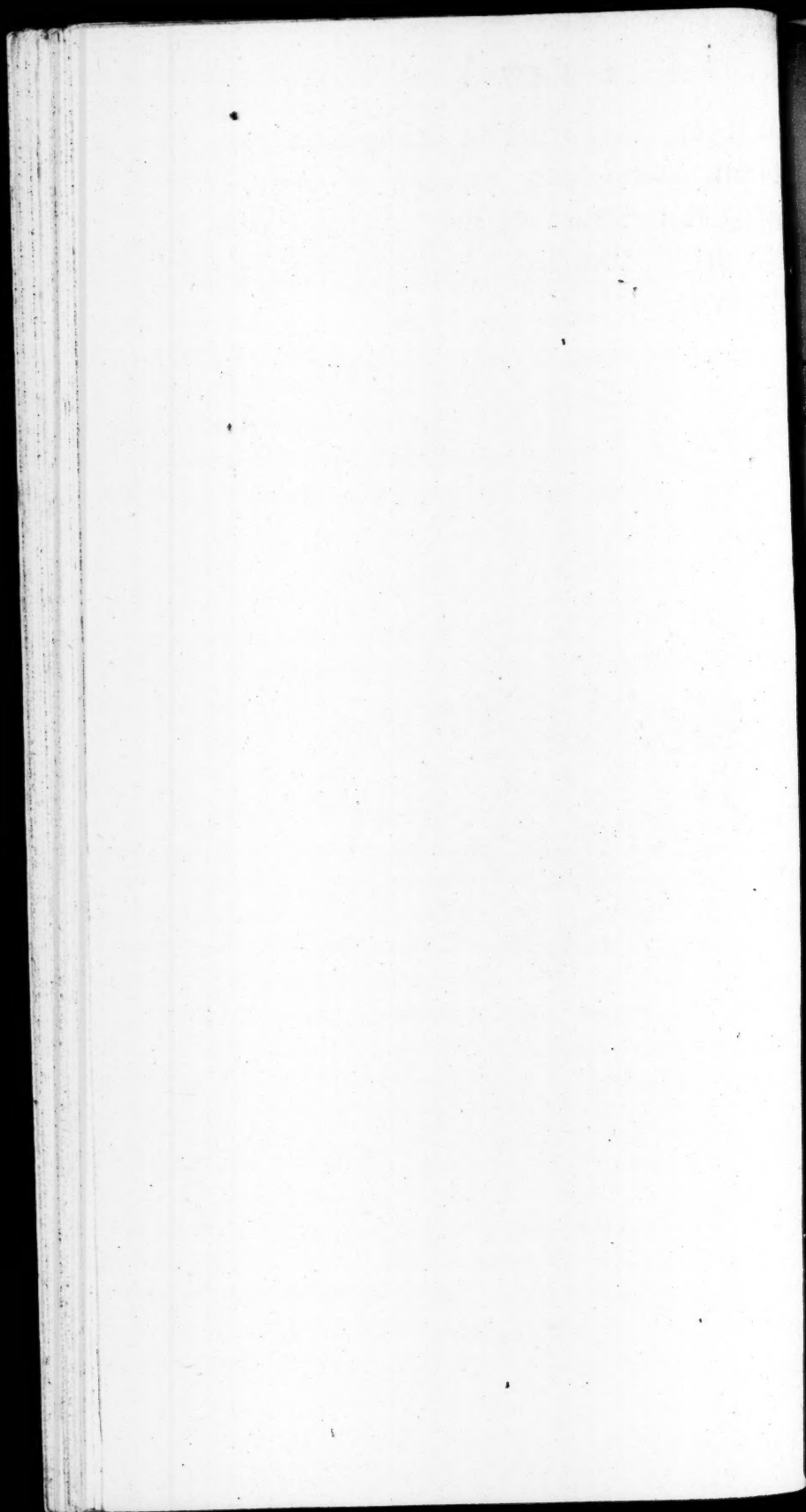
words,

words, in which the sacred writers, under the influence of the blessed Spirit, have represented it. As for many of those mysterious things, wherein I seem to place the whole essence of the Christian religion, I shall not attempt to defend what I understand not. But for the plainer matters of the gospel, the principal precepts, and main doctrines, which support the practice of them ; I think it may be demonstrated, that they are founded in the reason and nature of things, consistent with the known perfections of God, and evidently conducive to promote the welfare of nations, and the present and future happiness of every particular person. So that I conclude, that as there is nothing in the nature of the Christian religion, which hath the least tendency to prove its being an imposture, but, the contrary, is calculated to promote the noblest ends and purposes ; and being confirmed by such wonderful works, by miracles so numerous and great, as those of our blessed Saviour and his apostles, sufficiently argues its divine original ; and that therefore it is

ith it an indispensable obligation on
 men, who are capable of under-
 standing the nature of that evidence on
 which it is founded, both to believe
 and obey it.

F I N I S.





A N
ANSWER
TO A
LATE BOOK

Entituled,

*A Discourse of the Grounds
and Reasons, &c.*

By SAMUEL CHANDLER.

The Second EDITION.



L O N D O N,

Printed in the Year, MDCC XXVII.



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INTRODUCTION.

AFTER I had finished the preceeding discourse on miracles, I thought it could be no ways improper to annex it, some considerations, in answer to that book, entituled *A Discourse of the grounds and reasons of the Christian religion* : and the rather, because the author of it hath been pleased to shew, that miracles are of no use to prove the truth of Christianity ; which I shall make appear, that he is not able to maintain. As the author of this performance hath not thought fit to own

his name, I shall not pretend to guess who he is ; but cannot help saying, that in controversies of such a nature, as no wise man should write without having impartially considered matters, so no honest man should be ashamed, or afraid to own his sentiments, as publicly as he endeavours to propagate them. 'Tis a peculiar happiness under the present government, that no person hath any reason to apprehend any molestation, upon account of his particular opinions and speculations in matters of religion : I am firmly perswaded, that every man hath both a natural right to judge of himself, and to own and defend his principles as openly as he pleases, provided it be done with temper and good manners inasmuch as the cause of God and truth can never suffer by fair debate, and most strict and impartial enquiry.

The adversaries of the Christian religion have made frequent insinuations, that they have unanswerable objections against our religion, had they but the liberty of publicly stating and defending them. I cannot but think that this liberty should be freely allowed them :

heartily wish, for their farther assistance, we could recover the ancient writings of *Celsus, Julian, Porphyry*, and others the great opposers of the Christian religion, that we might know how strong their cavils and objections were ; because no considerate Christian hath, I believe, any farther regard to *Jesus Christ*, than as he thinks him the messenger of God, or for the religion he taught, than as he apprehends it agreeable to truth. For my own part, I should be sincerely pleased to see all their objections stated in their strongest light, that I might the better understand, whether or no my profession and hopes, as a Christian, are built on any solid and reasonable foundation. If our modern deists can fairly make Christianity appear to be an imposture, I shall readily part with it : if they cannot, all their objections against it will but the more firmly establish its divine Authority.

'Tis however highly requisite, that controversies of this nature should be managed with great moderation, and regard to decency and truth. Passion and

and prejudice, unfair misrepresentation and injurious charges, banter and ridicule, how much soever abounding in other controversies, are certainly very improper in this ; where the great debate is, which is the most certain way to virtue and happiness in this life, and to the more substantial and durable blessedness of another. I am sorry I am forced to say this of the author I am now considering, that he seems to have thought himself under no obligations to observe any of the rules of decency whatsoever or of paying that strict regard to truth which becomes a reasonable and an honest mind. His whole performance, though pretended as *a proof of Christianity*, has no other view than to expose it as *a weak and groundless thing*, and seems to be designed as an insult on the author and first publishers of it. His sneer at St. Paul for that passage, *Gal. iv. 21. &c. p. 1* his putting the mission of *Mahomet, Zoroaster, the incarnate deities of the Siamese and Brachmans, and Jesus Christ* upon the same foundation ; *p. 23.* making the *prophets of the Old Testament to get their livelihood by dis-*

ering lost goods and telling fortunes ;
 29. his ascribing the establishment of
 Christianity to a rabbi, and the prote-
 ant religion to the devil ; p. 61. are se-
 veral instances of his regard to decency
 and good manners. His making *the Old*
Testament the sole proof of Christianity,
and the Old Testament writings the only
proof of scripture to Christians ; his
 petty assertion, that *Christianity is not*
main Christianity, but mystical Juda-
ism ; that many of the *Jews believed*
the gospel before 'twas published,
and were as much Christians as those
converted by the apostles ; p. 15. his ci-
 ting texts of scripture, which evidently
 prove the contrary of what they are cited
 to prove ; p. 29, 80. are, out of many,
 some few specimens of his great integri-
 ty, and love to truth. Such dishonest and
 unfair practices as these shew, not the
 weakness of Christianity, but the spite and
 nature of its adversaries ; and incline
 the more to think, that the cause of
 fidelity is not founded on truth, because
 of the mean arts which are made use of
 to support it.

I think my self however obliged, on this occasion, to acknowledge what I believe to be true : that there are, among those gentlemen, who, as I think, are so unhappy as to disbelieve Christianity, some, who would scorn the little method the author I am considering hath taken to expose a religion he plainly appears not to understand, or wilfully to have misrepresented ; and have honour enough to despise the man who makes use of them : and that tho' I charge this writer with several gross immoralities, upon account of his manner of writing, yet I am far from fixing the like charge of immorality upon others, merely because they have not the same honourable sentiments of Christianity with those, who see reason to believe it ; as hath been too often, and, I think, unfairly done. Nothing is more unjust, than that the vices of particular men, in any body or society, should be charged on the whole. Christians would not like such a treatment from others ; and they should therefore be as sparing in giving it, as they would be unwilling to receive it.

Sure I am, that as Christianity needs no such methods to support it ; so it hath little to fear from such performances I am now to consider ; whatever opinion the author of it may be vain enough to expect from it.

For tho' there may be some difficulties in the application of several of the *Old Testament* prophecies, cited by *Christ* and his apostles ; yet I think it may evidently be made appear, that no objection from hence is of such force, as to weaken the credit of the Christian religion, and to prove *Jesus Christ*, and his apostles impostors.

The great article, which this gentleman would endeavour to persuade his readers to believe, is, that Christianity hath *no other foundation, than the prophecies of the Old Testament* to support it ; and that those proofs are *typical and allegorical* ; that *they are not urged in the New Testament according to the literal and obvious sense which they seem to bear in their proposed places in the Old ; and that therefore they are no proofs, according to the critical rules, i. e. they are really no proofs at all ; and that therefore the Christian*

Christian religion hath no reason or argument to defend it self ; p. 39. Thus he tells us, that Christianity *Christ's new law, was not properly new law, but Judaism explained, and set in a due light, as taught, or predicted in the Old Testament ;* p. 14. And again, p. 7. for which he vouches our Saviour's authority ; Moses and the prophets are, not only without further miracles, but tho' miracles should be wrought in opposition to them, sufficient foundation of faith ; And again, p. 31. that if the proofs of Christianity, from the Old Testament be not valid ; if the arguments, founded on those books, be not conclusive ; and the prophecies, cited from them be not fulfilled : then has Christianity no just foundation ; for the foundation on which Jesus, and his apostles, built it, is then invalid and false. tho' the only foundation on which Jesus, and his apostles, built Christianity was the prophecies of the Old Testament : which he farther confirms, telling us, that the miracles said to be wrought by Jesus, and his apostles,

half of Christianity, cannot avail a-
 thing in the case, or be of any use
 prove the divine authority and mission
 Jesus Christ. Hence he tells us, *that*
the miracles of Christ, tho' equal to
what the Jews expected from the Mes-
siah, were no proof to them that he was
the Messiah, p. 34. and that they did
 justly reject Jesus, and crucify him,
 asserting his mission and doctrine
 with miracles, as any other person who in
 virtue of miracles would lead them into
 idolatry, p. 34. 36. compared. Thus
 he acquit the Jews from all the
 guilt of our Saviour's blood ; and
 justify them in crucifying *the Lord*
life and glory. In opposition to this
 they cavil against Christianity, I shall en-
 avour,

To shew that Christianity hath
 fewer foundations to support it, than
 the prophecies of the *Old Testament.*

That the prophecies of the *Old*
Testament, are so far from being the
 foundation of Christianity, that they
 are

are never once urged by the *New Testament* writers, as the proper, much less the *only proofs* of *Christ's* divine mission and authority, upon which the truth of Christianity depends.





CHAP. I.

CHRISTIANITY *supported by other proofs than the Old Testament Prophecies.*

THAT Christianity hath other foundations to support it than the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, plain from the *New Testament*, and in the apologies of all who have written in defence of it. The frame and contour of the Christian religion it self, its excellent doctrines, its admirable precepts, its powerful motives, and the end it was first calculated, and hath a manifest tendency to promote, *viz.* the honour of supreme being, and the present

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and future happiness of mankind, have always been accounted, and urged, as very strong arguments of its divine authority. The miracles wrought by *Jesus* and his apostles, in confirmation of it ; the manner, circumstances and education ; the integrity, disinterestedness, and piety, and principles of its first publishers ; and above all the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, after his crucifixion and death, *Acts* i. 3. *shewed himself alive, after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen above five hundred brethren at once, and remaining with them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God ;* 1 Cor. xv. 6. the consequent effusion of the *Holy Ghost* on the apostles, according to his promise, whereby they were qualified to preach the gospel to every nation thro' the gift of tongues ; the amazing success, and vast progress of the gospel, in opposition to the prejudices of all mankind ; the malice of the *Jews*, and the power of the *Gentiles*, whereby were verified the most express predictions of *Jesus Christ* ; the destruction of the *Jewish* city, and temple, and nation, according as our Saviour foretold ;

should be ; the number, constancy, and
 extraordinary supports of those who died
 the profession, and thereby gave their
 testimony to the truth of it ; these, and
 other such like considerations, are such rea-
 sons for our belief of Christianity, as have
 never yet been overthrown by its profes-
 sors, and most inveterate adversaries. Our
 faith therefore, as Christians, stands not
 on the single foundation of *Jewish* pro-
 phesies ; much less on prophecies typically
 or allegorically explained, *i. e.* such, as
 according to our author, *p.* 39. are *ei-*
ther not to be found in the Old Testa-
ment, or not urged in the New, accord-
ing to the literal and obvious sense, which
they seem to bear in their supposed places
in the Old, and therefore not proofs at
all of the things they are cited to prove.
 Can this author be ignorant, that such a
 representation of *the grounds of the Christ-*
ian religion, is false and injurious ? and
 can any one who reads it help suspecting
 great dishonesty and insincerity in him
 who makes it ? This is not that fair stating
 of objections against Christianity,
 which, in his preface, he so strenuously
 urges ; and which, I wish was granted

to every one without exception, the knows how to write with temper and decency. But for any one to lay down an evident falshood, as his first principle, and on that false foundation, to scoff at, and ridicule the Christian revelation ; that looks not like the reasoning of an honest impartial enquirer, but like the effect of prejudice and malice, and is, I cannot help saying, a conduct unworthy either a well bred, or a virtuous man. I doubt not but our author esteems *Cicero*, *Seneca*, and other writers of that age, much greater men than our Saviour and his apostles. If he can read them, and will be at the pains to consult them, he will find, that tho' there were no more believers in the religion in their country than he himself is, yet they wrote with more good manners, and with much greater regard and love to truth, than he hath shewn in his present performance, and herein they deserve his imitation. The applying of the prophecies of the *Old Testament* to our Saviour, hath always been esteemed as a matter very difficult and uncertain ; and various methods have been made use of, by Christian expositors,

plain and defend them : an evident
 proof, that they did not build their faith
 on this foundation, either wholly, or,
 principally ; but that they had other very
 strong reasons to support their belief in
Jesus Christ, and which more than ballan-
 ced the difficulty of their not being able to
 account for many of the prophecies of the
Old Testament, which they saw were ac-
 tually applied to him by the writers of
 the *New*.





C H A P. II.

Prophecies never urged

C H R I S T, and his
*postles, as the sole pro
 of Christianity.*



HAVING shewn in the foregoing chapter, that Christianity is supported by many other arguments besides the *Old Testament* prophecies ; I proceed to shew farther, that the prophecies of the *Old Testament* are so far from being the sole foundation of Christianity, they are never once urged by the *New Testament* writers, as the proper, much less the only proofs of the divine au-

ty and mission of *Christ*, on which depends the truth of Christianity. Our Saviour himself doth not place the truth of his mission on this, as *the sole foundation*; nor any of his apostles after him.

In order to set this matter in a clearer light, 'twill be necessary to consider *Jesus Christ* under a twofold character, and as supporting each part of it with proper proofs. He is to be considered as a *prophet*, or a *messenger sent from God to mankind*; and as *the Messiah*, or *that particular prophet, who was anciently promised to, and had been long expected by the Jewish nation*. It is evident that these are very different considerations; whether *Christ* was a real prophet, and whether he was that particular prophet, and deliverer, spoken of in the sacred writings of the *Jews*, and who, as they believed was to be the Saviour of their nation. The character of a prophet doth not infer that he is the *Messiah*; and the same arguments which will abundantly prove the one, will be far from being a sufficient proof of the other. Doctrines taught by any person, claiming a divine mission, agreeable to the nature of God, and conducive to the real

happiness of men, supported by real miracles ; or such works, wrought for such an end, as do plainly manifest, and necessarily infer the assistance of some superior being, are certain proofs that such a man's pretensions are agreeable to the will and pleasure of God. But this will not prove him to be the *Jewish* Messiah and Saviour without the concurrence of other circumstantial evidence ; *viz.* unless the ancient prophecies, descriptions, and characters relating to the Messiah in the *Old Testament* scriptures, be referred by such a person to himself ; and actually receive the proper accomplishment in him.

If then we examine by what arguments our Saviour endeavoured to support his character, as a prophet, or to prove that he acted by authority from God ; we shall find they were such as were not at all peculiar to the *Jewish* state or circumstances, but proper for the conviction of all persons wherever his gospel should be preached, to whom the evidence of its truth should be fairly propounded. The grand characters of his divine mission, and on which he laid the principal stress, were his teaching the most excellent doctrines, and the

affirming them by the most wonderful
 works. At his first appearance in the
 world, he mentions nothing of the pro-
 phesies of the *Old Testament*, nor makes
 the least appeal to them for the truth
 of his pretensions ; having no right to ap-
 peal them to himself, nor hope of success,
 could he attempt it, 'till he had some
 evidence or other manifested that he had autho-
 rity and power so to do ; but refers men
 to *the words he spoke, which were not his
 own, but the father's who sent him ; and
 the works he wrought which witnessed
 for him.* It was anciently a part of the
 prophetick office, to deliver to the people
 messages of God, and to instruct them
 and exhort them to their duty. Ac-
 cordingly, our Saviour begins his mini-
 stry with delivering the best and most use-
 ful instructions to his followers, and car-
 rying the great duties of morality to so no-
 ble an height, and enforcing them by such
 mighty motives, as that *the people were
 astonished*, both at the doctrines them-
 selves, and at his manner of teaching them,
Mat. vii. 28, 29. and cried out, *Did e-
 ver man speak like him ? John vii. 46.*
 such a method of instruction plainly evi-
 denced

denced, that he was a teacher much superior to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; and was a noble preparative to his reception as a prophet, or a person sent from God.

And his pretensions to such a character were abundantly confirmed by those wonderful works which he performed : which *Christ* himself declares to be wrought by the finger or power of God ; and which were such, as were certain and absolute proofs, that he acted under the agency and influence of some superior being. Some of the miracles he wrought were of this nature, as that they seem to have been done by the immediate interposition of God himself ; such as raising the dead, creating bread for the multitude, and restoring limbs to the maimed. I cannot indeed deny, but there may possibly be some created beings of so superior a nature, as to be capable of doing these things ; but however, he who charges him with the affirmative, will have a difficult task to prove it. The creating something out of nothing, and raising the dead, appear, as yet, to me, to be instances of the greatest possible exertion of power,

therefore applicable only to him, *to whom*
power belongs. But whether this be
 or not, it matters but little to the ar-
 gument. All the circumstances of our
 Saviour's life make it very evident, that if
 his miracles were not performed by the
 immediate influence of God himself, yet
 they were done by the assistance of some
 good and powerful being in subordination
 to him. For as a good being can never
 act but in a manner agreeable to the divine
 will, and for very good and valuable ends;
 neither can an evil being statedly pur-
 sue any other design, but such as is suited
 to his proper nature, and serviceable to
 his particular interest and inclination. The
 very supposition therefore, that our Savi-
 our wrought his miracles by the assistance
 of evil spirits implies, either that he was
 himself a very bad man, or that the end
 to be answered by them was evil, disho-
 nourable to the supreme being, or prejudi-
 cial to the real happiness of men; or that
 he considered himself a wicked person, and in con-
 sideracy with spirits as wicked as himself,
 they could both unite to carry on a design,
 in which nothing could be more wor-
 thy of God, and of the best of angels, and
 of

of men to promote. That the general design of Christianity is good, many the more sober and unprejudiced Deists themselves have acknowledged : and must be owned so by all, who place the worship of the only living and true God in spirit and truth, and the engaging men in the practice of all moral duties, by the most weighty motives, and so preparing them for the highest happiness, among great and good designs. And therefore our Saviour's pretensions to be *a prophet of God* would have been abundantly justified by his doctrines and miracles, tho' there had been no standing revelation from God, at that time, in the world, nor any one singular prophecy relating to him.

So that what this author affirms, *p. 3. that the miracles of Jesus Christ, are otherwise proofs of his divine mission, and the truth of Christianity, than as they fulfill the sayings of the Old Testament, in other gospel matters and events*, is without any foundation of truth. Because real miracles are certain proofs in themselves, that the person who doth them acts by a superior commission and power, and they may be so circumstanced, with

having recourse to prediction, as to be
 proof of his mission from God. Had
Jesus Christ been the first prophet that e-
 appeared in the world, before there
 been any manner of supernatural revela-
 tion from God; he might have given such
 proof of his divine mission, tho' there
 had been no preceeding prophecies to bear
 witness to him, as would have been very
 satisfactory and convincing; and therefore
 whoever can support the claim of a di-
 vine mission by such evidence, will have
 a just right to be believed and received as a
 prophet. Now thus it was in fact with
Jesus Christ. The miracles he publicly
 wrought were such, as did certainly argue
 the interposition of some superior being;
 and they were wrought in confirmation
 of such an end, as none but a good be-
 ing can be supposed to promote: it
 follows therefore, that his mission was
 agreeable to the will and pleasure of God,
 and is withdrawn from the consideration of all
 former prophecies and revelations whatso-
 ever: his miracles thus circumstanced were,
 contrary to what the author of *the grounds*,
 affirms, *good proofs in themselves*
 that he was sent of God; and not merely
 on

on account of their being consonant to the prophecies concerning the Messiah. The great difficulty was to prove his being sent of God ; which was to be done in such a manner, as might be sufficient to convince those who never had any revelation at all, nor knew any thing of the *Jewish* prophecies concerning him. Without this they would have had no reason to receive him, and believe in him. The characters, whereby the Messiah was to be known, were but incidental, and peculiar to the *Jewish* nation ; and therefore could not, with any advantage to the Christian religion, be urged to any other persons but *Jews*, 'till after they had been established in the belief of the divine authority of the *Jewish* scripture and therefore were not at all essential to the character of a prophet. As they doth not in the least suppose the necessity of a former revelation, as that of the Messiah did (the prophecies of which revelation were to be accomplished in a person assuming that title, before they to whom the promises of the Messiah were made, could be obliged to acknowledge

and submit to him as such) so it
 to be supported by such proofs, as
 be sufficient to satisfy all without
 ception, who are commanded to be-
 lieve in him, whether ever they had
 benefit of a former revelation or

So that there is a vast deal of
 difference between the proofs from mi-
 racles, and other matters recorded in
Old Testament, tho' equally pro-
 ved of with respect to the Messiah:
 the former being a proof to be de-
 nied from every one who lays claim
 to a divine mission, and, as circum-
 stanced in *Christ*, being demonstrative
 of that God had sent him: the
 latter being only proofs, that he was
 the particular prophet spoken of and de-
 scribed in the *Jewish* scriptures.

It doth not therefore follow, as this
 Author, with great modesty positively as-
 serts, p. 36. *That the Jews did as justly*
as Jesus, asserting his mission and doc-
trines with miracles, as any other person,
in virtue of miracles, would lead
into idolatry, or any other breach
of the Mosaic Law. For real miracles,
 brought in favour of doctrines contrary

to

to truth, and repugnant to the the nature
 and perfections of God, (which is the case
 when wrought in support of idolatry) and
 with them their own proof, that the person
 who doth them is not sent of God, and
 that therefore he is an impostor, and
 he pretends to act in his name. God
 can no more be the encourager of vice
 and idolatry, than he can pose and con-
 tradict himself; and therefore he that
 doth ever so many wonderful works
 with such a design, for such an end, tho'
 he may pretend to be a messenger from
 heaven, yet immediately to be rejected
 as a teacher, and seducer of the people,
 because no argument can possibly be
 so strong to prove him sent from God,
 as this is to prove the direct contrary,
 whereas the miracles of *Christ* were
 performed in confirmation of no doctrine
 contrary to the principles of natural
 reason and religion; but to promote
 an end, which, from all the notions
 we have of God's wisdom and goodness,
 have reason to think worthy of his
 encourage and promote.

Nor did he, as this author seems intimate, p. 36. ever pretend to oppose, or set aside, the real intention of the *Mosaick* Law, or lead his followers into the breach of it. But to state such an objection, he plainly tells *Jews*, in one of his discourses, *think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, 'till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, 'till all be fulfilled*, Mat. v. 17. 18. So that as the miracles of *Christ*, were not wrought in confirmation of any doctrines contrary to truth, or in opposition to the genuine intention and design of the *Mosaick* law ; the *Jews* acted very unjustly in rejecting *Jesus*, whose mission from his heavenly father was supported by the noblest testimonials. They misunderstood their own scriptures, and expected that the Messiah should be, and do what it was never intended of God he should be or perform ; tho' this might prejudice them

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against

against his person, and be an objection
 to their receiving him, yet it cannot
 the least invalidate the real proofs of
 divine mission, and therefore not who
 justify the *Jews* in rejecting him; it
 possibly it may be some alleviation
 their sin and guilt. That the Messiah
 was to be a king and a triumphant prince
 was fully evident from the Scriptures.
 Hence the *Jews* always expected, that
 he should bring with him salvation and
 deliverance. But the nature of his
 kingdom, subjects, enemies, triumphs
 and victories, was no where fully de-
 scribed; the clear manifestation of which
 was reserved for the time of his ap-
 pearance, tho' there are many prophecies
 that describe his Kingdom and reign in
 such a manner, as cannot possibly be
 understood of a temporal dominion or
 power. Much less was it any where
 expressly predicted, that he should de-
 liver them from their subjection to the
Romans, and make *Jerusalem* the capi-
 tal city of the whole earth. Of con-
 sequence his laying no claim to a tem-
 poral Kingdom, nor proving to the *Jews*

that our author calls, a *real*, i. e.
temporal deliverer, was so far from
 being an argument that he could
 not be a *prophet*, that it did not
 prove he could not be their Messiah,
 so to be those great descriptions of the
 Messiah's kingdom and glory could fair-
 ly be interpreted, and have their accom-
 plishment another way. Had he indeed
 claimed any kingdom at all, and never
 attended to account for his sufferings,
 of to expect any glorious reward of
 triumph; this would undoubtedly have jus-
 tified the *Jews*, in not receiving him
 as the Messiah; since nothing was more
 fully predicted of him, than that *the*
government should be upon his shoulders,
that he must reign 'till all his ene-
emies were put under his feet. Since
 therefore, in their own confession, Jesus
was as never man spake, and did the
works that none ever did; since he laid
 claim to the honours of a kingdom, and
 ordered all his followers, that he would
 give them salvation and deliverance for
 ever; instead of not being disposed
 to make him for their Messiah, upon

the account of his miracles and doctrines, because he appeared, in some respects, different from what they expected him ; they ought rather to have searched the scripture with greater freedom from prejudice, and to have considered whether they were not mistaken in the sense of the prophecies, and of consequence in their expectations concerning Messiah : and the rather, because he gave, not only all the same proofs of divine mission, as any of their former prophets did, but equal to what they expected even from the Messiah himself. Such a person's differing from them, as to the interpretation of scripture prophecy was rather a reason why they should suspect their own judgment, than to reject him upon the account of it : especially if it could be made appear that his account of them was more glorious and beneficial ; that the prophecies, which foretold *the Messiah's kingdom*, spake also of *his suffering* : that it was perfectly reconcileable that the *same person* should be crucified and yet a *triumphant prince* ;

it as it was part of the office of a prophet to *give new revelations* of God's will, so also it was to explain the *difficult parts of former revelations*.

And supposing what our author adds, p. 55. was true (tho' 'tis not altogether true) for some of his kindred believed in him, that *his miracles had no effect on his brethren and family*; what will he say to prove by it? that he did no miracles at all? This his unbelieving brethren allowed, *John* vii. 3, 4. Or that he did not perform them in confirmation of his excellent doctrines? He had even the testimony of his enemies in this respect, *John* vii. 4, 6. Or that his confirming his most excellent doctrines by real miracles was no proof of his divine mission? The evidence of truth depends not on the consent of prejudiced men concerning it; it is the same, whether it be submitted to their judgment. And this, in short, is the point our author should have fixed on, and proved, that he intended to support his scheme of infidelity: not what the opinion of the multitude was, concerning *Jesus* and his

works, and interpretations of scripture which is but of little weight or use ; but either that he did not do those works nor teach those doctrines which are ascribed to him ; or that if he did, they afford no proper proof of his mission and authority from God.

For it was to this united evidence that our Lord appealing, as to the great arguments that his father had sent him. When he first entered on his public ministry, the better to prepare the way for his reception, *he went about healing all manner of diseases and sickness among the people ;* Mat. iv. 23. And when John sent his two disciples to enquire of him, *whether he was that person who should come, or whether they were to look for another,* he gives them for answer ; *not that his mother was a virgin, or that he was born in Bethlehem, or of the family of David, or called out of Ægypt,* which would have been the most improper return to their question ; but that *him the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were clean*

deaf made to hear, the dead raised,
the gospel preached to the poor. Mat.
 5. hereby putting the proof of his
 phetick character and mission from
 upon the miracles he wrought, and
 gospel he preached. Thus also we
 him at other times appealing to the
 undoubted testimonials. As in his
 ver to Philip, *Believest thou not that*
am in the father, and the father in
? i. e. that the father hath sent me,
that I act by authority from him? The
ds that I speak unto you, I speak
of my self, and the father that dwel-
in me he doth the works, John xiv.
 23. And from this he draws the proper
 rence, *Believe me that I am in the*
er, and the father in me ; believe my
 mission from him, on account of
 truths you have heard me deliver :
t, at least, believe me for the very
s sake, i. e. on account of the
 cles you have seen me do, in con-
 ation of the doctrines I have taught,
 y father's name. Can any thing be
 e evident from hence, than that
 Lord here lays down his words

and works, his doctrines and miracles,
the proper grounds and reasons of
receiving and believing in him? It is
that *Jesus* doth now and then refer
Jews to the scriptures of the *Old Testament* ; *Search the scriptures, for*
them ye think ye have eternal life, and
are they which testify of me, John v.
not as tho' the *only*, or proper proof
his prophetick character, and mission from
God, was to be fetched from the ancient
prophecies therein contained ; but either
that he gave the very same proofs of his
phetick mission, which their own scrip-
tures had laid down ; or that, as on the
hand, he had abundantly established
character as a prophet, by his doctrines
miracles ; so they might learn on the other
by considering those ancient prophecies
and their accomplishment in him, not
to own him as a meer prophet, but to
knowledge and submit to him as
promised Messiah.

— This also was the way of arguing
by his apostles after him. Thus St. Paul
in order the more effectually to bring
over his countrymen, the *Jews*, to

of *Christ*, tells them that *Jesus of*
Nazareth was a man approved of God a-
mongst them ; or one whom God own-
 ed to be his servant and messenger to
 them, *by miracles and signs and wonders,*
which God did by him in the midst of
them, as they themselves well knew, Acts
 22. And the author to the *Hebrews*,
 in like manner declares, that the grand
 confirmation of the Christian religion were
signs, wonders and miracles, which
 were wrought by *Christ*, and his apostles,
by the power of the Holy Ghost, Heb.
 2. And elsewhere we are told, that
 this was the peculiar recommendation of
 the gospel, and that which rendered it
worthy of all acceptation ; that Christ came
into the world to save sinners ; 1 Tim.
 2. and that he *brought life and immor-*
tality to light through the gospel, 2 Tim.
 1. So that this is the great founda-
 tion, which the first preachers of Christia-
 nity lay down, on which we are to build
 our faith in *Christ* ; viz. the certainty
 of *Christ's* miracles, the nature of his doc-
 trines, and that excellent design which he
 came into the world to accomplish.

And

And accordingly these were the things which gained him his first disciples among men. Thus, at the feast of passover, *Many believed in him, when they saw the miracles which he did,* John ii. 22. These, as wrought in confirmation of his doctrines, were, in the judgment of Nicodemus, an unanswerable argument that he was a teacher sent from God. *No man can do those miracles that thou dost, except God be with him,* John iii. 2. As the blind man, restored to sight by Jesus, publicly confessed before the Pharisees, *If this man was not of God, he could do nothing,* John ix. 33. At other times they were *astonished at his doctrines*, and could not think that such a teacher could receive his instructions from any one but God. Thus, when he was at Samaria, *Many believed because of his own word : and said unto the Samaritan man, now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world,* John iv. 41, 42. See also to this purpose Mark i. 22. Luke xxiv. 19. It is evident

andantly from what hath been said,
 our author hath been a little too hasty
 in asserting, *that Jesus, and his apo-*
ground Christianity entirely on the
orical Sense of the Old Testament
hecies ; when it doth not, as I appre-
 d, appear from one single instance,
 at that they ever appeal to the prophets, as
 No proper evidence of *Christ's* prophetick
 lost, character, and divine mission : the proof
 2. which, was antecedently necessary to
 being acknowledged as the Messiah.
 the contrary, they always refer men
 God, his miracles and doctrines, as the most
 3. convincing arguments that God had
 his done him. And was it not that I have
 such sent from the *New Testament* to ex-
 ns from pose that *Charity, which hopeth all*
 e was ings ; I should think the contrary as-
 of sion of our author, in opposition to
 he cplaineft declarations of *Christ* and
 e of t apostles, owing, not to his want of
 rselv e and enquiry, but integrity and
 ed t e of truth.

The *Old Testament* doth indeed sup-
 se the attestation of miracles neces-
 y to sumer of the
 Messiah ;

Messiah ; and therefore his working miracles was so far an accomplishment of the scripture prophecies. But then 'tis to be considered, that miracles are not peculiar to the character of the Messiah but declared, in the *Old Testament* writings, as a proof always to be expected and demanded from every one pretending to act by commission from God. So that a one can have no claim to be believed, unless his pretensions be supported by proper credentials ; and 'tis reasonable to expect, either that God should bear him witness, by an immediate testimony, or voice from heaven, or by some very extraordinary and wonderful works, which he enables him to do. Without some such divine interposition, to support his claim of a mission from God, it could not be known that God had sent him ; and so long as one could be under any obligation to acknowledge and submit to him without such. And 'tis evident from the scriptures, that signs, and wonders, or miracles, are things which all prophets were enabled more or less to do, and

they were expected as proofs of this
 character from every one who assumed
 Thus the *Jews* are represented, as *seek-*
after a sign from *Jesus* ; not as a proof
 of his being the Messiah ; but of his be-
 coming what he declared himself to be, *sent*
of God his heavenly Father. And the
 they would have expected from every
 pretending to come in his name. And
 ce, both Christians and *Jews*, look on
 pretensions of *Mahomet* to be a prophet
 God, as all imposture and cheat ; because
 declaring he was not sent to work mira-
 cles in answer to those who demanded
 miracles from him, he refused to give
 demonstration of his divine mission,
 which they, amongst whom he came,
 had a certain right to demand from
 him. So that the miracles prophecied
 in the *Old Testament*, to be done
 by the Messiah, were not spoken of
 as somewhat peculiar to his character,
 whereby he might be known,
 and distinguished from all other pro-
 phets ; but as proofs to be expected
 common from all, who pretended
 to prophetick inspiration and autho-
 rity.

rity. And tho' the *Jews* were inclined
 many of them, to believe in *Christ*, and
 Messiah, when they heard of his extra-
 ordinary works ; yet were not themselves,
 the sole inducement to owning him as such.
 But, as he manifestly proved himself to be
 an extraordinary prophet of God, by the num-
 ber of miracles he wrought, his excellent
 doctrines, and method of teaching ; so
 were ready to conclude farther, that he
 must be the Messiah, because they
 many circumstances, relating to the Mes-
 siah, concur in him ; and especially
 these miracles were wrought at that par-
 ticular time and season, when they
 universally expected the Messiah's appear-
 ance. And therefore the miracles of *Christ*
 not to be urged as absolute proofs of
 his being the Messiah, *i. e.* of the
 accomplishment of the *Old Testament*
 prophecies relating to the Messiah.
 nor are they produced, that I know
 of, by any one, thus to render a
prophecy valid, which is in itself
valid ; or to make a false inference
true ; or a prophecy fulfilled, that

fulfilled. This is the meer fig-
 t and imagination of our author ;
 seems to think, that every body writes
 as little consistency, and regard to
 as he doth himself. But doth it
 before follow, as he would feign per-
 de us, that the miracles said to be
 ight by *Christ* and his apostles, (for
 seems to question the truth of them,)
 of no avail ? *p.* 31. Or that because
 do not prove what they were never
 ended to prove, therefore they prove
 ing at all ? Or that because they were
 in themselves sufficient to distinguish
 point out the Messiah, therefore they
 of no use to establish his character as
 prophet ? The characters of a prophet
 Messiah carry very different ideas,
 are to be supported by as different
 fs. Many particular circumstances,
 ways implied in the notion of a pro-
 Mess, such as the place, and manner of
 I and life, &c. must concur to point
 the Messiah ; whilst the confirming
 doctrines, and holy precepts, by
 miracles, are certain and sufficient
 fs of a prophetick mission, in him,
 who

who thus confirms his pretensions to
 These things concurred in *Jesus Christ*
 who never applied to himself any of the
Old Testament prophecies, to prove him-
 self the Messiah, 'till he had abundantly
 manifested his mission from God ; and
 hereby his power and right to explain the
 writings, and apply the prophecies of the
 prophets who were before him.



C H A P. III.

the Dependance that
 CHRISTIANITY *hath*
on Judaism.



I must be acknowledged that the truth of Christianity doth now depend, not only on *Christ's* being a real prophet, but on his being the true Messiah; because he himself claimed this double honour, and his apostles, after him, applied to him the ancient prophecies relating to the Messiah. And therefore I think our author would have talked much more to the purpose, if he had endeavoured to prove, that some of the *Jewish* prophecies, which referred to the Messiah, were accomplished in our *Jesus*, than

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he hath done in finding fault because
 his apostles have applied so many to
 him. For in reality, supposing that
 some of the passages they refer to him
 did not originally respect the Messiah
 this will not in the least shake the foundation
 of our Saviour's divine mission, which
 depends on the truth of the gospel history.
 And the truth of this depends, not on the
 inspiration and infallibility of his apostles
 but on their knowledge of the facts there-
 in ascribed to him, and their integrity and
 honesty in relating them. So that if he
 can shew, that they have impertinently
 applied any passages out of the *Jewish*
 writings to *Christ* ; the consequence
 to be allowed is, not that *Jesus* was an
 impostor, which is the great point he
 weakly attempts to establish ; but either
 that they were mistaken in the sense
 of such passages themselves ; or rather
 that they applied them in that sense
 in which they were then generally un-
 derstood by the *Jews* themselves. But
 if he can fairly make it appear, that
 any of the prophetick passages, applied
 by the *Jews* to their Messiah, were not

ever accomplished in our *Jesus* ; this I
 will allow to be of great disservice to Chri-
 stianity ; the truth of which depends on
 his being the Messiah, as well as on his
 being a real prophet ; he having affirmed it
 of himself, that he was so. But then 'tis
 to be considered, that Christianity hath
 no any natural intrinsic dependance even
 on this ; and had not our blessed Lord
 put on him the character of the Messiah,
 it never would have had any at all. Had
 he been born in the most distant part of
 the earth from *Judea*, and done the
 same works, and taught the same do-
 ctrines, and propagated his religion
 by the same means, and never either
 seen or heard of the *Jewish* scriptures ;
 it would have been a prophet of God,
 and his religion, as it ought to have
 been received, so it would have been suf-
 ficient to have guided men into all
 truth and happiness. So that the true,
 I think, only reason, why Christi-
 anity hath any dependance on *Jewish*
 prophecies, or *Christ's* being the Mes-
 siah, is not because it would have been
 an imperfect institution without this ;

but because *Christ* assumed this character and applied the prophecies, originally relating to the Messiah, to himself. And therefore the great question will be, whether the same person can be supposed, at the same time, to prove himself both a real prophet, and a real impostor ? Christianity, as a revelation from God, stood upon solid and substantial proofs, antecedent to his appeal to the ancient prophets ; and would have carried its obligations upon all to whom the evidence of it should have been proposed, to have owned and submitted to it as such, tho' he had never cited or applied any one of these prophecies at all. And yet if, at the same time, he declared himself to be the Messiah, when in reality he was not, so far his testimony would have been false ; or in other words he would have been an impostor, or seducer : a supposition so very absurd, that no man but a person, at all hazards, resolved never to be a Christian, can possibly admit to be true. So that Christianity's depending on the truth of *Christ's* being the Messiah, is somewhat forced.

eign to its nature, and meerly acciden-
 : and therefore upon *Christ's* claiming
 s double character, both of a prophet
 d the Messiah, the first enquiry, in or-
 of nature, should be ; not whether
 was the Messiah, because that involves
 h it the character of a prophet, but
 ether or no he was a true prophet. If
 was not, his pretensions to be the
 ssiah ought to have been immediately
 cted : if he was a real prophet, he had
 ight to be believed on his assuming
 farther character of the Messiah ; i.
 it was highly reasonable, that those
 o were convinced that he was the
 ner, should believe him, upon his
 ming himself to be the latter ; or,
 the *Old Testament* prophecies
 e, and would be verified in him,
 : a s^{tho'}, according to the then received
 hat no interpretation of them, they might not
 , resol^{ble} to understand how. Not be-
 can po^{ssibly} hereby a *false interpretation or*
 that C^{orruption} of scripture could be made
 truth^{ful} one ; but because 'tis highly in-
 somew^{hat} probable, that God would permit the
 fore^{most} person to be a true prophet, and

a real impostor ; or that any superior good beings should help a person to work miracles, to confirm both truth and falsehood ; or that a true prophet could be so presumptuous and wicked, as to claim so great an honour, if it did not in reality belong to him. And therefore, the proof of *Christ's* being a prophet had originally, no dependance on his being the Messiah ; yet, on his declaring himself to be that person whom the Jews expected, the one could not be believed without the other : and his testimony in this respect, was worthy of belief both because he sufficiently proved his mission from God, and as shall be shewn the *Old Testament* prophecies were accomplished in him.

So that the apology which this author makes for the *Jews*, for their rejecting and crucifying the Lord, his life and glory, when he tells us, p. 20, that the numerous and wonderful miracles wrought by Jesus, tho' equal to what the Jews expected from the Messiah, were no proofs to them that he was the Messiah ; is very far from being

ing sufficient to vindicate their conduct. Or if *Christ*, by his miracles and doctrines, gave sufficient evidence of his being *sent from God*, they were bound to receive him as such, upon this evidence: in regard to their crucifying a prophet of God, in opposition to such a demonstration of his divine mission, was an argument of great obstinacy and wickedness. And if having thus established his character, as a Jewish prophet, he farther claimed to be that particular prophet whom they expected, in confirmation hereof, continued to teach more excellent doctrines than any the preceding prophets had ever taught, and to perform as many, and as wonderful works, as, according to their own confession, the Messiah himself was to do, when he came; their not being disposed to receive him as the Messiah, can not argue a deficiency of proof in his, p. 10, but the want of an honest and unprejudiced disposition of mind in them. Nor can it be argued, from this connexion of *Christianity* with *Judaism*, what our author, with his usual candor, asserts, p. 15. that *Christianity*

and *Judaism*, is the same thing ; or the
 the *gospel* is not a *new law*, but *Judaism*
explained, and set in a due light
 or that, as he tells us, p. 13. the *Old*
Testament is yet the sole true canon
scripture, as it was in the beginning
 of *Christianity*. 'Tis true, that the
 and grand principles of religion are the
 same, under both the *Jewish* and *Chri-*
stian dispensations ; such as the unity
 of God, the worshipping him only, and
 the worshipping him in sincerity and
 truth, as the necessary and certain way
 to secure his blessing and acceptance.
 far all true religions must agree ; and
 of consequence the *Jewish* and *Chri-*
stian ; which as they were the only re-
 ligions in the world, that sufficiently guar-
 anteed against *polytheism* and *idolatry*,
 each of them appeals to God for its
 author. And it must also be farther ob-
 served, that the prophets amongst the *Jews*
 did predict many things which should
 happen to the *Messiah*, and many things
 which should come to pass, after the
 establishment should be upon his shoulders
 which predictions have been ex-

verified

fied. What will follow from hence ?
 Why that God, who is an intelligent
 & conscious being, tho' for wise rea-
 sons he was pleased to settle the *Jewish*
 form of worship, for a season, yet had
 determined to introduce a more perfect
 dispensation, by a greater and more excel-
 lent person than *Moses*, by whom he
 made himself known to the *Jews* ; and
 accordingly foretold, by inspired men
 amongst them, many things relating to
 his future great person, and the end of
 his coming. But doth it follow, that
 because *Judaism* (which was designed
 only for a particular Nation, and was
 therefore to last but for a particular sea-
 son) was to be succeeded by a more
 excellent and perfect religion, it was
 therefore the same with that religion
 which was to succeed it ? or that because
Jewish prophets did *plainly* foretell
 many things, which were afterwards to
 be fulfilled under the Messiah, therefore
 these things were the *secret mystical mean-*
ings of their prophecies ? Excellent rea-
 soning this of our author ! *Judaism* fore-
 told a better institution in future times :

Ergo

Ergo, that institution is the same *Judaism*. the *Jewish* prophets plain-
foretold many things which were to come
 to pass in the Messiah's time ; which
 predictions have accordingly been verified
 therefore the actual accomplishment
 these predictions, is the *spiritual* sense
 of them. Who can withstand the
 force of such an argument ; and how ter-
 ribly is Christianity in danger, which has
so fair, yet *powerful* an adversary to con-
 pose it ? And was there ever a more dis-
 useful, and convincing proposition ad-
 vanced than this, *that the plain prophecies*
of the Jewish prophets have been
filled by the secret spiritual sense
them ?

But however *Christianity* must still
mystical Judaism. For according to the
 author, p. 15. St. Paul saith, Gal.
 8. Heb. 11. *That many of the Jews*
were, long before the coming of Christ
deemed real Christians, and equally to
believe the gospel or Christianity, with those
who were converted by the apostles.
 I frankly own, I should have had as much
 an opinion of St. Paul, had he asserted

as I have of our author, for asserting
of *St. Paul*. The apostle's words
They which are of faith, the same
be the children of Abraham. And the
figure, foreseeing that God would justifi-
fy the heathen thro' faith, περιευνγελισατο
before the gospel unto Abraham,
In thee shall all nations be blessed. Now
the plain meaning of this passage is this;
such who imitate the faith of *Abra-*
ham are properly his children ; and that
the gracious promise, which God was
made to make to *Abraham* in ancient
times, *In thee shall all nations be blessed,*
is to be accomplished, even as the scrip-
ture foretold it should, by their being
justified by faith. But *most divine* is our
author's comment here ; and so well ver-
ified as he in mystical meanings, as that he
draws a *secret spiritual sense* out of
the plain passage. As thus, the scripture
εὐαγγελιζεσθαι, or God, as the scripture
says, brought this good message to *Abra-*
ham. *In thee shall all, &c.* Therefore
even, in *Abraham's* time, did equally
give the gospel with those who were
afterwards converted by the apostles. Or
thus ;

thus ; the scriptures did plainly predict
the *Gentiles* were to be justified by faith ;
therefore many, in *Abraham's* time, were
deemed real *Christians* ; or therefore *Chri-*
stianity is nothing but *Judaism* explained
and set in a due light ; *i. e.* mystical *Ju-*
daism. Can such a secret spiritual meaning
and account of so plain a passage, have
other than divine discernment ? p. 93.
could any one, but a person of our
author's great intelligence, have imagined
this to have been St. *Paul's* intention
Happy man, whose imagination is fruitful
with such conjectures, and who employs
his pen in giving us such new, yet faithful
comments on our scriptures ! But in the
the same divine strain, he farther argues
It is to be observed, saith he, p. 15. that
our Saviour, who assures us that he came
to fulfil the law and the prophets, did
not to destroy the religion of the Jews,
nothing in writing to establish his new
law, if it may be so called, which is
not properly a new law, but *Judaism*
explained, and set in a due light. Let
attend now to our author's admirable man-
ner of drawing consequences. *Christ*

that he came to *fulfil the law and*
prophets, i. e. to answer all the pre-
 sents relating to the Messiah ; therefore
 he came not to set aside the *Jewish* sacri-
 fice to alter or destroy the *Jewish* reli-
 gion. Or thus, *Christ* declared, *he came*
to fulfil the law and the prophets i. e.
 in that new dispensation spoken
 of in *the law and the prophets* ; there-
 fore he hath not established a new law :
 thus, *Christ* came to fulfil the prophe-
 cy of the *Old Testament* ; therefore the
 religion of *Christ*, is *Judaism* explained,
 set in a due light. How natural do
 the consequences, from their premises,
 appear at first view ? And how great an
 error must we form of so exact and
 clear a reasoner !
 The truth is, that *Christianity* and *Ju-*
daism are so far from being the same,
 that they differ in every thing, in which
 religions can be supposed to differ :
 the latter being appointed for a particular
 time, and end, and confined to one peo-
 ple only ; designed as an introduction to,
 the prophesying of a future better state ;
 proceeding with ceremonies, and rites
 of

of no intrinsic worth, and supported
 promises, and threatnings, mostly, if
 altogether temporal : whereas Christian
 is that more excellent state prophecies
 in the other, designed for perpetual
 and to be of universal obligation ;
 recommends the *worship of God in
 and in truth* only, and is supported
 the noblest motives, *viz.* arguments drawn
 from the intercession of an all-powerful
 Mediator, and the rewards and punishments
 of an eternal state.





CHAP. IV.

the New Testament Canon.

S
 our author hath been very unhappy, in his attempt to prove *Christianity* and *Judaism* the same; so I hope it may be made, 'tis with as little reason that he as-
 farther, p. 13, 14. that the *Old* *Testament* is the *sole true canon of scrip-*
ture to Christians (meaning thereby a
Canon established by those, who had a
divine authority to establish a canon,
and in virtue thereof did establish a
Canon as it was in the beginning of
Christianity. Of which passage, I think
 the plain meaning, viz. that
 the *New Testament* writers
 had

had no power to establish a canon; did not actually, in virtue of that power, establish any canon; therefore, if the canon of the *Old Testament* is a canon thus established, 'tis the sole canon now for Christians. I must observe here, the author seems to have as mean an opinion of the *Jewish*, as the *Christian* canon: and readily confesses, p. 135. *that the books of the Old Testament were greatly corrupted, i. e. changed from what they were, when they proceeded from the authors of them; that as to the Pentateuch particularly, it must have been, above all the other books, liable to great alterations, because there was but one copy of it left for a considerable while; and that as to all the others, they were liable to great corruptions during the captivity; that they were considerably altered by Esdras, or some body else, he knows not who, after the captivity. It follows from hence, that he would feign to us, good man, believe, that neither Jews nor Christians have any canon at all. I confess, I have* though

thoughts. As to the corruptions of the
ewish writings, I shall consider that
 later elsewhere ; and only shew here,
 as *Christians*, we have a *canon*,
 that *entirely distinct* from the
ewish.

Let it then be considered, that if our
 Lord was a real prophet, and sent
 God to instruct the world ; then, what-
 ever he delivered in the name of God,
 became a proper *canon* or *rule* of action.
 The doctrines he taught, and the pre-
 cepts he gave, proceeded from God ;
 those who heard him, were obliged to
 believe the one, and submit to the other,
 in obedience to God ; *i. e.* they would
 have been the *canon* or *rule* of their *faith*
and practice. Of consequence, if these
 doctrines and precepts were designed for
 the general use of mankind, and they
 were faithfully taken down in wri-
 ting, by persons who heard them, or
 who had them brought to their re-
 membrance, in an extraordinary super-
 natural manner ; they would carry with
 them the same obligation upon all
 to whom they should be manifested,

with their proper evidence, in the distant ages and nations. Again, if the apostles of our blessed Lord had an unerring spirit, *to lead them into all the truths* which were necessary to form, establish, and preserve the *Christian church* then whatever they taught, under the influence of that spirit, was a *canon*, or rule, to those churches, amongst whom they ministered. If they taught any thing of general concern, such things would be of general obligation : if any of their directions were suited only to particular circumstances, those directions would be obliged only in like circumstances ; if they have been a *canon* or *rule* of action when the same, or like things should have occurred, which first occasioned them. If these directions were observed at several times, or not known to be the directions of such persons 'till many years, or ages, after they were first given ; yet they will still carry their obligation, whenever they are known or believed to be such ; be the directions of those, who directed themselves by an unerring

in giving them. If this reasoning be
 d; then, as *Christians*, we have a suf-
 ficient *canon*, or *rule* of faith and prac-
 tice, entirely distinct from the *Jewish*.
 If the gospels contain a true account
 of *Christ's* life, and doctrines, and of the
 will of God delivered, for the general
 use by *Christ*; then they are a proper
rule or *rule* from God to us. The
 question is not, whether *Christ* wrote
 the gospels, or whether he declared them
 canonical? (we own he did not) but
 whether what they contain be a just ac-
 count of that revelation he brought from
 God? If it be, I will take upon me
 to answer our author's question; *If*
Christ, and his apostles, have declared
these books canonical? I would ask, Who
or could, afterwards declare, or
declare any books canonical? Why, every
man who believes that these books do
contain a genuine account of the gospel
of Christ, and that his gospel is a revela-
tion from God: the canonicalness of
the book, or our being obliged to re-
gard any book as a rule, depending
on its containing the will of,

or a revelation from God. In like manner, if the epistles, said to be written by the apostles, are really theirs ; if they were so instructed by the divine spirit in the nature of *Christ's* gospel and kingdom, as to qualify them to gather churches by their preaching, and to direct them in cases of importance, by epistle when absent from them ; then the epistles are properly *canonical*, *i. e.* they are a proper *rule* to all Christian churches, as far as they contain instruction of general use, or as far as they relate to the particular circumstances of a church.

What then, if it were true, which our author asserts, *p.* 14. tho' 'tis far from being so, *that the books of the New Testament are all occasional books* ; this will not hinder their being canonical. Were they written by those whose names they bear ? And did they contain proper directions for those, for whose use they were originally written ? If so, they were *canonical* ; *i. e.* they were designed, and ought to have been received as a *rule*

ose, who were the occasions of their being
 first written : and they are so far a *rule*
 to us, and will be to the church in all
 succeeding ages, as there is any thing in
 them suitable to our circumstances or
 theirs.

'Tis to as little purpose to object *p. 14.*
that the books of the New Testament
were not joined together in one body or
collection, nor declared to be canonical till
the seventh century, when the contro-
versy about the canon was, as our au-
thor tells us, determined by human autho-
ry. For would our author have had the
 books of the *New Testament* collected in-
 to one volume before some of them were
 written? Or would he have had the *last*
living apostle collected all the writings of
 the other apostles into one book, when,
 as probable, he had never seen many of
 them? The canonicalness of any books
 doth not depend on any one apostle's
 collecting them into a volume. If *Paul*
 and *John* wrote this and the other
 epistle, and if it appears that they wrote
 them as apostles, *i. e.* for the directi-
 on and obedience of the church; they

will be *canonical*, or *rules* to all churches in like circumstances, whether *Peter* and *James* declared them so or not. If any book be not written by an inspired person ; neither *Peter* nor *Paul* could make it an inspired book ; and if it was written by such a one, it needed not *Peter's* or *Paul's*, approbation. Why then tho' this, or the other book was not received, as *canonical*, 'til several hundred years after *Christ* ? This proves nothing but that the evidence for its being written by the apostle, whose name it bears, was not clear 'till this time, and its being received as *canonical*, at such a distance after it was written, proves that there was new evidence of its being an apostolick writing ; or at least that that evidence appeared satisfactory to some, which was not deemed sufficient by others. And therefore all that can be inferred hence is, that to whom the evidence is less convincing, there will be a proportionably lesser degree of assent to them, and authority in the book.

The collection of all the books in one volume, by any one apostle, sec

most impossible ; the epistles being writ-
 ten at different times, to different chur-
 ches, and at very remote distances from
 one another. It was necessary that the
 several epistles should be communicated
 to those churches, to whom they were
 written, to others ; that the proofs
 of their being apostolical writings, and
 the occasions of their being first penned
 should be carefully examined. And
 when once there was sufficient proof,
 that they were the epistles of the apostles
 of *Jesus Christ*, and written for the use
 of the church ; any man might have ga-
 thered them into a volume, and that vo-
 lume would instantly have become a *ca-*
non or *rule* of faith and practice to *Chri-*
stians ; not because established as such by
human authority ; but because the
 writings of those, who were authorized
 and qualified to be the teachers of the
 church of *Christ*. And if there could,
 at this distance of time, be found out
 one or more epistles of any of the apo-
 stles, written, with the same view ; they
 should also, for the same reason, be
canonical, notwithstanding it would be

now almost seventeen hundred years before their discovery.

So that the enemies of *Christianity* seem hitherto to have quite mistaken the controversy, or at least to have kept clear of the main turning point of it. 'Tis ridiculous to be nibbling at the authority of this, or the other book, or to be continually dinning us about the time of the establishment of our canon. This is manifestly quite beside the purpose. The controversy lies here, and here let our enemies speak all they know. Did Christ's apostles the *Holy Ghost*? Did they the care of the churches? Did they write any epistles to them for their direction and government? Are the books we now have, any, or most of them, their writings, lesser errors excepted? Let them *prove the negative*, and 'twill be time enough to think of *parting with our Christianity*: 'till they can do all their attempts to undermine the religion of *Jesus Christ*, will be vain and ineffectual,

I shall only add here, that what we speak of this, or the other book, they

All the books of the *New Testament*,
 being a *canon*, we do not mean that
 any individual word, or sentence, in
 the books is, or ever was designed
 as a *rule* ; but that they are a rule
 in as they contain the *gospel of Christ*,
 in every thing wherein they can be,
 ought to be a rule. When St. *Luke*,
 in the *preface* to his gospel, declares the
 reasons that induced him to write it ;
 when St. *Paul*, in the close of his
 epistle to *Timothy*, orders him to bring
 him *the cloak* he left at *Troas*, and
his books and parchments ; 2 Tim. iv.
 I do not apprehend the *gospel* hath
 anything to do with these, and the
 other things ; and therefore cannot think
 that parts of our epistles and gospels to
 be *rules*, because occasionally given, and
 not at all relating to faith and practice.
 Whenever the apostles write about
 the *gospel of Christ*, either stating or de-
 claring its principles, or giving and en-
 forcing the precepts of it, in which the
 whole of their writings, some few ex-
 ceptions excepted, are taken up ; thus
 they are *canonical*, i. e. a proper
rule

rule to us; because, as the apostles certainly had the gospel by revelation from the spirit of *Christ*, so 'tis reasonable to think, that the same spirit should direct them to proper arguments and motives to support it : nor doth any supposition appear more incredible, than that God should, in so extraordinary a manner reveal the gospel to the apostles, and yet leave them at an entire loss how to support it, or suffer them to support it by false arguments. Not to add that it was the express promise of our Lord, *that he would lead them into all truth* ; and enable them fully to understand his gospel, and direct them to the most proper methods to propagate and defend it. It will be time enough to state the part of the controversy, when our adversaries have any thing material to say upon it. I therefore return to our author.

And that I may agree with him as far as I can, I am very free to own, *that miracles*, as he oddly enough expresses it, *under the circumstance of attestation, something contrary to an antecedent*

lation p. 32. really such, will not
 be the person who doth them, *sent of*
 , nor the truth of what he delivers
 the name of God. Yea, I will go
 er, and affirm that such a one, not-
 standing his miracles, cannot be sent
 God. And therefore, if any person
 shes contrary doctrines, or opposes
 true and proper design of that former
 lation ; he is not to be received as
 s messenger, (because God cannot
 al contradictions as truths) tho' he
 ld work ever so many miracles to
 firm it. After this observation, one
 ld have expected, he should have
 shewn, how *Christs* doctrines were
 rary to those delivered by former
 hets, or that he plainly contradicted
 design of the *Jewish* revelation.
 ere again he flies off, and his strength
 him ; and instead of proof, he tells
 f allegorical reasonings, and mysti-
 fenses, and the interpretations of
 oies ; and when he should argue,
 in the room of it groundless sup-
 ons, and, in a multitude of words,
 nothing at all to the purpose.
 But

But now on the contrary ; if a person pretending to a mission from God, or the truth and authority of such a revelation, supplies what was defective in it, clears up what was obscure, but darkly intimated, establishes and confirms it's noblest maxims and principles and is so far from overthrowing its proper design, as that he openly declares *came into the World* on purpose, and the most proper methods labours, to perform and answer the end of it ; and in confirmation of such a pretension, besides most excellent doctrines taught, doth shew numerous wonders and miracles ; this is the strongest argument that his pretensions are true, and that he ought to be received in the character he assumes. This as our author well knows, what at *Jesus Christ* pretended to : and 'till the contrary can be fairly proved, banter, ridicule, hard names, groundless imputations, and the like, will, with wisdom be no disservice to *Christianity*, nor any reputation to the cause of scepticism and infidelity.

fine the miracles wrought by our
 ed Lord, as they were performed in
 firmation of a religion worthy of God,
 conducive to the present and future
 iness of men ; tho' they did not,
 use of themselves they could not, prove
 to be the Messiah ; yet they did eve-
 ce him to be *a prophet sent from God*,
 are therefore a substantial proof of
 truth of *Christianity*. And therefore
 d once more ; if this gentleman and
 friends would do any thing to the
 pose, to weaken the credit of *Chri-*
stianity, they must either prove, that
 facts ascribed to *Jesus Christ* are
 ; or that they were not performed
 the assistance of some superior
 er ; or that the end they were
 ought in favour of was not good ;
 hat bad men, in confederacy with
 spirits, can stately pursue a de-
 contrary to their nature and inte-
 or that good spirits can lend their
 ance, to enable a person to work
 cles, in confirmation of his pre-
 ons to a mission from God, who
 y had none. 'Till these things, or
 some

some of them, be plainly made their starting difficulties about and prophecies, and other matters of moment, may discover their inclination to prove *Christianity* a falshood, can never subvert that firm foundation, on which the truth of it is established.

Not that I think there is such a vast of difficulty in the application of the prophecies of the *Old Testament* to our blessed Saviour, as hath been imagined. The author asserts indeed, that they are *impertinently alledged*; p. 32. that *they are not some of them to be found at all in the Old Testament*; and when they are *not urged by the New Testament* matters, according to their literal and obvious sense; p. 39, 40. and that *therefore all commentators on the bible, who advocates for the Christian religion, both ancient and modern, have judged them to be applied in a secondary, typological, mystical, allegorical, enigmatical sense, i. e. in a sense different from the obvious and literal sense, which they bear in the Old Testament, i. e. impertinently*

107. I shall forbear all censures, which
 e would judge such an untrue represen-
 n deserves ; and instead of reproach-
 o unfair an adversary, shall endeavour
 ive some satisfactory account of the
Testament prophecies, as they are ap-
 by the writers of the *New*.





C H A P. V.

*Concerning the Sense and
ference of the Old Testa-
ment Prophecies.*



NOTHING I think is
evident, than that many
ges of the *Old Testament*
things have a farther refer
than to the times wherein they were
penned, and the persons to whom
part, they might more immediately
long. I am not now to enquire to
distant times, or persons they were in-
ed to refer ; but to shew from the
literal, natural sense of the words
they did not wholly relate to, and
not fully accomplished at the time

were first delivered. Out of many
 ges. which have this view, I shall
 t some few of the principal. And
 'twill be difficult to account, in any
 able manner, for that passage, *Gen.*
3. I will put enmity between thee
the woman, and between thy seed
her seed ; It shall bruise thy head,
thou shalt bruise his heel ; unless it
 s to some future person, who was to
 a compleat victory over him, by
 se temptation our first parents fell.
seed of the woman here spoken of,
 antipathy that was to reign between
 , and the *different issues* of this an-
 ny, make it evident, that he who
 these words had some very remote
 n and event in view ; *Eve*, as yet,
 g no children, and it being there-
 impossible that the words could
 en accomplished. The whole story
 d would be incredible, if we suppose
 erpent, literally understood, to be
 mpter. But 'tis not at all improb-
 that an evil spirit, in the form
 is once beautiful creature, should
 ade them to a revolt. In his own

Q

proper

proper character he durst not appear must be in some shape familiar to that he might the better insinuate himself into her good opinion, and so the more easily deceive her. And if so, 'twas improbable that the *serpent*, literally understood, should be punished, while the *great seducer himself* should be free to escape without it. His punishment was to be *the bruising of his head*, the destruction of his power by the *man's seed*: an insignificant curse, respected *only the serpent, the beast of the field*; but worthy the supreme government if denoting his punishment, by which craft the woman was persuaded into her first transgression. And this expectation is somewhat confirmed by God's promise to *Abraham*, Gen. xii. 3. *I shall all the families of the earth be blessed*: which promise, that Abraham might not understand it of his own time or person, is afterwards more clearly explained, Gen. xxii. 18. *thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*. Could Abraham understand this of any present

the world was to receive from him? her, was it not an encouragement to look forward, and to expect one or other of his posterity, who prove a common blessing to and? And is there not manifestly the view to futurity, in that prophesying of *Jacob* to his son *Judah*? xlix. 10. *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver between his feet, until Shilo come; unto him shall the gathering of the people be.* Here is manifestly a distant foretold: that the scepter should be given to *Judah*: that *Shilo* should be that the scepter should not depart from *Judah* 'till *Shilo's* appearance: that then to him should be the gathering of the people. I cannot help taking notice also of the words *Isaiah*, mentioned by the author of *Discourses*, &c. p. 28, *Deut* xviii. 15. *Prophet will the Lord your God raise up to thee, like unto me. To him ye shall hearken.* The gloss he puts on this passage is; that God would establish an order and succession of prophets amongst them, in analogy to the heathen.

heathen diviners, who, for victuals, presents, and money, were to shew divine inspiration, by discovering goods, and telling of fortunes. And this he cites several passages of the *Testament*, which, not one of them, carry so low and ludicrous a meaning as insinuates ; nor mention any thing but the character and dignity of a prophet of God to discover and foretel. I will not deny, but that this may be part of the meaning of this passage, that God would from time to time, raise them up prophets to instruct them in his will, to support them in time of danger, to direct them in cases doubtful and uncertain, to encourage them to obedience, to recall them from idolatry, to help the distressed, to predict some special great events, where there should be occasion for such an extraordinary interposition. But, this I affirm is not *the first, the natural and the meaning* of these words, which evidently refer to *some one particular prophet*, in process of time, was to be raised up who was to be like unto *Moses*, who therefore was to be highly in favour, and to bring a new revelation

world as *Moses* did, as well as to be the author of a very great deliverance as he did. It was necessary all these circumstances should concur in this prophet, to the accomplishment of these words ; therefore they had a much farther extent than to the present time, in which they were first spoken. And 'tis very remarkable, that he, who added the last chapter to the book of *Deuteronomy*, tells us, *that there rose not a prophet since, in Israel, like unto Moses* : in confession, that in his time this prophecy was not accounted to have been fulfilled.

In the book of *Psalms* we shall also find many passages which speak of things, which were to have their accomplishment until after his times ; either describing some great and glorious person, who was to sit on the throne of *Israel* ; or who was to be subjected to the most grievous and cruel reproaches and sufferings. Thus the *110th Psalm* speaks of one, *who was to have an ever-lasting kingdom and priesthood ; to reign over his enemies, and to triumph over his enemies.* The same person is de-

scribed *Psal. xlv.* in terms more
 five of majesty and glory : as girding
sword on his thigh, riding prosperously
cause of truth, meekness, and righte-
ness ; as a God having a throne for
and ever, as being anointed of God
the oyl of gladness above his feet.
 The *lxxii Psalm* is also a farther instance
 of this nature : which, tho' the title
 it was in part penned with a vision
Solomon, yet contains such strong de-
 scriptions, as I am apt to think few will
 low to be literally true of him.
 particularly those which relate to the
 prosperity, perpetuity, and extent of his
 kingdom, *ver. 5, 8, 9, 10, 11.*
They shall fear thee, as long as the sun
and moon endure, throughout all genera-
rations. He shall have dominion from the
sea, to sea, and from the River to
the ends of the earth. They that dwell
in the wilderness shall bow before him.
 ----- *The kings of Tarshish, and*
Isles shall bring presents. --- The
of Sheba and Seba shall offer gold.
Yea all kings shall fall down before
him. -- All nations shall serve him.
name shall endure for ever. --- His

he continued as long as the sun. O-
 passages seem to be directly contrary
 ne parts of his known character ;
 s relate to the continued righteous-
 f his reign, and the equity, justice,
 mildness of his administration, *ver.*
 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14. *He shall*
thy people with righteousness, and
poor with judgment. The mountains
bring peace to the people, and the
hills by righteousness. He shall
the poor of the people, he shall
the children of the needy, and shall
in pieces the oppressor. In his days
the righteous flourish, and abun-
of peace so long as the moon endu-
 These, and the like descriptions,
 not very applicable to *Solomon* ; it
 appearing from his history, that he
 a lover of women, degenerated
 idolatry, and laid such burthens
 people to maintain his grandeur,
 support him in his pleasures, as
 the foundation for the revolt of
 tribes, from his son and suc-
Rehoboam ; and to whom God
 ceased, even in his life time, to

raise up many powerful enemies, *but his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.* See 1 Kings, xi. thro out.

In the prophetick writings, the presence of the prophecies to some times is yet more manifest and clear, as plain as the most exprefs words make it. How full are they of lofty descriptions of the happiness and glory of some distant season, which was to come out under the reign of a wise and good, a mighty and victorious prince, who was to proceed from *David's family*? *Isaiah* abounds with such prophetick descriptions. *There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots,* *Isaiah* xi. 1. And in the following part of the chapter, the equity and righteousness of his government, and the security and happiness of his subjects under him, is elegantly set forth. See also *chap. i.* 3, 4. The same is farther declared *Isaiah* xxxii. 1. *Behold a king shall reign in righteousness :* And in *chap.*

assures the fearful *Jews*, that there
 is an happy time coming, when the
 most beneficial miracles should be wrought,
 when holiness and purity should
 be universally obtain. In *chap. xlii.*
 he is introduced as speaking of some
 particular person, in whom he *delighted*,
 in whom he would *uphold*, and who
 was to be *a covenant to the people, and*
a light to the Gentiles. The same
 person is evidently spoken of, *Isai* xlix.
 where God is represented as declaring,
 that he should *raise up the tribes of Ja-*
rah, and restore the preserved of Israel ;
 that he should be *given for a light*
to the Gentiles, and to be his salvation
to the ends of the earth. In *chap. lii.*
 he is spoken of, but under very dif-
 ferent circumstances. As that *his visage*
 should be extremely *marred ;* that he
 should appear *without form and comeliness ;*
 that he should be *rejected of men ;* that
 he should be *cut off out of the land of*
the living, and be stricken for the trans-
gression of the people : But that never-
 theless he should *live to see his seed,*
 and *prolong his days ;* that he should
 see

*see of his travel of his soul and be
 tisfied ; and that he should have a port
 on with the great, and divide the spo
 with the strong ; even for this reason
 because he poured out his soul unto death
 was numbred with the transgressors, bore
 the sins of many, and made intercession
 for the transgressors. And to mention
 no more, he is spoken of chap. lxi, lxiii
 as one anointed by the spirit of God, to
 proclaim salvation and deliverance to
 persons of a broken and contrite heart
 as one travelling in the greatness of
 his strength and mighty to save ; as one
 who had obtained the most glorious victo
 ry by his own arm ; and as returning from
 battle in triumph, wearing garments
 stained with the blood of his slain and
 conquered enemies. I am not now en
 quiring to whom these descriptions
 are to be referred. But from the passages
 I have mentioned, and others which
 might have been produced out of the
 same book, there is nothing more evi
 dent, than that the grand argument
 which *Isaiab* insists on, to comfort the
 pious *Jews* in those calamitous times*

and which is interwoven in almost every prophecy he delivered, was the promise of more peaceable and happy times, under the reign of some great and good prince, who was to descend from David's family, and of whose government and throne there should be no end.

Jeremiah also, who prophesied after Isaiah, spake plainly of the same happy season. *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safe. And this is his name, whereby he shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.* And he who wheredecares, that *the days shall come*, and when so likely as under this victorious and righteous prince) when God would make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; a covenant more excellent than that he made with their fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Ægypt; viz. that

that he would *put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts* and when they *should all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest of them, and have their iniquities forgiven, and their sins remembered no more* chap. xxxi. 31. And that this happy person was to be under the government of that *righteous branch*, that was to proceed from *David*, seems evident from chap. xxxiii. where the prophet, speaking of the joyful state, and settled government of God's people to come, declares that in those days, and at that time, God would cause the *branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and that he should execute judgment and righteousness; that in his days Judah should be saved, and Jerusalem should dwell safely; and that the name, he was to be called by, should be THE LORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

Ezekiel also, who succeeded *Jeremiah* speaks in the same strain, of one who was to come from *David's* family, and under whom the people of God were to enjoy the greatest security and happiness. Thus he introduces God, as

clarifying

ing, I will set up one shepherd over
 m, and he shall feed them, even my
 vant David; he shall feed them and
 shall be their shepherd. And I the
 rd will be their God, and my servant
 id a Prince amongst them: I the
 rd have spoken it. And I will make
 b them a covenant of peace, Ezek.
 iv. 23, &c. And this covenant he
 where describes in the very same
 nner, as *Jeremiab* did that covenant
 which he prophecied, viz. Then will
 rinkle clean water upon you, and ye
 ll clean. - - From all your filthiness,
 from all your Idols will I cleanse
 A new heart also will I give
 and a new spirit will I put with-
 you-----And I will put my spirit
 bin you, and cause you to walk in
 statutes, and ye shall keep my judg-
 ts and do them, chap. xxxvi. 25,

Compare *Jerem.* xxxi. 31, &c.
 to conclude; in another place he
 ously declares the same things should
 e to pass, under the same reign which
 had spoken of before, viz. chap.
 vii. 23, &c.

Daniel

Daniel also speaks of a certain number of years which should intervene between the restoration of the Jews, and the coming of *Messiah the Prince*; concerning whom he declares, that he *shall be cut off, but not for himself*, Dan. ii. 25, 26.

Joel in like manner declares, that there was an happy season coming when it should be known, more than ever, that God was in the midst of Israel, and when his people should never be ashamed; when his spirit should be poured out upon all flesh, and their sons and daughters should prophecy, and when his spirit was to be poured out upon every servant and handmaid, and without exception to be saved, who should call upon the name of the Lord; Joel ii. 27, &c.

In *Micah* we find also descriptions of the same flourishing state of things. *In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established, in the top of the mountain-----and people shall flow to it; and many nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain,*

of the Lord, and to the house of
 God of Jacob, for he will teach us of
 ways, and we will wa'k in his paths,
 iv. 1, 2. And in the next chapter
 farther declares, under whom this hap-
 pycason should commence. *Thou Beth-*
em Ephrata, thou thou be litt'e a-
ngst the thousands of Judah, yet out
thee sha'l be come forth unto me, that
to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth
be been from of old, from ever'ast-
And he shall stand and feed in the
ngth of the Lord, in the majesty of the
and his God, and they shall abide. For
shall be be great unto the ends of
earth. And this man shall be the
 re; chap. v. 2, 4, 5.

Haggai not only speaks of this il-
 lustrious person, but fixes the time be-
 fore which his appearance should not
 be delayed. *Thus saith the Lord of*
Hosts; I will shake all nations, and the
of all nations shall come, and I will
this house with g'ory saith the Lord
Hosts. The glory of this latter house
shall be greater than of the former, and
this place will I give peace saith the
 Lord, Hag. ii. 7, 9.

In

In *Zeckariab* we find repeated mention of some illustrious servant of God who was to appear, under the character of the *Branch*, in whose time God would remove the iniquity of his people in one day, chap. iii. 8, 9. In the next chapter he is represented in very extraordinary characters: *Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. And they that are far off shall come and build the temple of the Lord,* chap. vi. 12, 15. There are also many other remarkable passages in the same prophet, which have a reference to, and were to have their accomplishment in some future time.

But I shall take notice of no other passages than that of *Malachy*; which presents the most High as expressly declaring, *I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before*

the Lord whom ye seek shall suddain-
come to his temple ; even the messenger
of the covenant whom ye delight in. Be-
cause he shall come saith the Lord of Hosts,
Isa. iii. 1.

From these passages, and others of the
same nature which might be mentioned, I
think nothing appears more certain, than
that the writings of the *Old Testament*
are full of descriptions of some very great
and good prince, who was, one time or
another, to proceed from *David's* house,
to reign over God's people ; who
withstanding some sufferings he was to
suffer, was yet to triumph over all his
enemies ; and under whose reign the
knowledge of God, and the practice of
piety, and the happiness of good
men were to become more extensive
and flourishing than ever. --- This is the
plain and natural sense of the places
here cited, and not drawn from a my-
stical or allegorical interpretation of

It is also worth while to observe, how
perfect an agreement, there is between the
descriptions which are given by
different authors. As they all

R

concur

concur in predicting and expecting an happier state of things than ever had been in *Israel* before: so they do also as to the circumstances of that time. As it should be under the reign of a righteous king of *David's house*; who was to be a covenant to the People, and a Father to the Gentiles; whose reign was to be remarkable for an extraordinary knowledge of God, the most plentiful effusion of his spirit, a sincere and hearty obedience to the divine will, and that salvation which should be granted to the humble and contrite. This is evidently the happiness spoken of in the prophetic writings; and the agreement between them is so very exact, that one may be well assured that they either copied from one another, or rather that the several writers were directed by one and the same infallible spirit.

But 'tis also to our purpose to observe farther, that these prophecies relate principally to a *spiritual salvation* and deliverance, and not to a *temporal*; or to a real deliverance from ignorance and that knowledge and virtue may universally obtain, instead of

external enemies, and worldly grand-
 and prosperity. It is but of little
 ht, what sort of salvation the *Jews*
 ted. The question is, what sort of
 erance God intended, and the scrip-
 predicted? Why, *that a branch should*
out of Jesse, on whom the spirit of
om ---- knowledge ----- and of the fear
the Lord should rest; who was to re-
with equity for the meek of the
, and to slay the wicked with the
of his mouth, Isai. xi. 1. &c. A
shall reign in righteousness, chap.
1. And it shall come to pass in his
that the mountain of the Lord's
--- shall be exalted above the hills,
all nations shall flow unto it. And
people shall go and say, come ye,
et us go up to the mountain of the
to the house of the God of Jacob,
he will teach us of his ways, and
will walk in his paths, Isai. ii. 2, 3.
is day the Lord shall wash away
th of the daughters of Zion, and
one that is left in Zion shall be
holy, chap. 4. Then shall the spirit
red from on high ----- judgment
 R 2 *shall*

shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field, and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever ; chap. xxxii. When God's spirit should be poured out upon flesh, and all that should call on the name of the Lord should be saved, Joel ii. 1. When people should flow to the house of the Lord, and be taught of his ways, and walk in his paths, Micah iv. 1, 2. In this strain the prophetick descriptions generally run ; and I think 'tis so far from being true, that the main thing predicted in the *Messiah's* time, was a temporal deliverance and external worldly grandeur, that to me there is nothing more evident than that the prophecies refer mostly to the salvation of quite another nature.



C H A P. VI.

*the Jewish Interpretati-
on of the Old Testament
Scripture.*

AS the *Old Testament* scriptures do plainly contain predictions of future events ; so 'tis observable that the *Jews*, in our our's time, were so well apprised of reference of the prophecies to some at season, that they unanimously applied many of them to the *Messiah*, and time of his coming. There is nothing certain, than that they were in constant expectation of the *Messiah's* appearance, at the time when *Jesus Christ* appeared in the world : which expectation flowing to what they found spoken

and intimated in the prophecies of the *Old Testament* ; and because they imagined the time fixed for his appearance was at hand. Thus they gathered from several passages, that *Messiah* was to be son of *David* *Mat.* xxii. 42. that he was to be born in *Bethlehem*, *Mat.* ii. 6. for which purpose they applied *Micah* v. 2. that he was to be *David's* Lord, as *Chrysostom* observes *Mat.* xxii. 45. for which he cites *Psal.* cx. i. that he was to be a very great prophet, *Joh.* iv. 25. that he was to be the king of *Israel*, *Joh.* i. 49. that he was to abide for ever, *Joh.* xii. 34. Besides these instances, and more that may be brought from the *New Testament*, we also find that the *Chaldee* paraphrasts, *Jonathan* and *Onkelos*, refer many passages of the *Old Testament*, to the *Messiah*. Thus, that prophecy, *Gen.* iii. 15. That the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, is interpreted to be accomplished in the days of the *Messiah*, according to *Jonathan* and the *Hierusalem Targum*. And thus they interpret *Gen.* xlix. 10, 11. *There shall not be wanting kings and governours of the house of Judah, scribes from his seed to teach the*

king Messiah shall come, of whom
 I expound the whole remaining part
 of the prophecy, tho' evidently relating
 to Judah. And in this exposition Onke-
 agrees with them. The *Psalms* 2, 21,
 61, 72, 81, 132, are in part, or
 whole, applied by the *Chaldee Paraphrast*
 to the same person. Thus also in *Isaiab*,
Jeremiah, *Micah*, and *Zechariah*, * there
 are many passages applied by *Jonathan*,
 to the like purpose : which shews that in
 judgment, and according to the then
 opinion of the *Jews*, the *Messiah* was
 concerned in those prophecies, and that
 his accomplishment was to be in him.
 If these prophecies it may not be
 proper to observe ; that some of them
 are the very same which the *New*
Testament writers apply to our Lord *Je-*
sus. Thus *Psal.* 2. and 45. are applied
 by the *author to the Hebrews*, *chap.* i.
 9. The prophecy of *Isaiab*, which
 the *Hebrew* refers to *Christ*, *Mat.* i. 22,

R 4

23.

Isaiab. i. iv. 2. ix. 6. x. 27. xi. 1---6. xiv. 29.
 ---5. xxviii. 5. xlii. 1. xliii. 10. lii. 13.
Jerem. xxiii. 5. xxx. 9. xxxiii. 15.
Micah iv. 8. v. 2. *Zechar.*
 7. 7.

23. is also in part applied to the *Messiah* by *Jonathan*. See *Jonath. Paraph.* *Isaiab* ix. 6. Compare also *Mat* xii. 1. with the same paraphrase on *Isaiab* x. 1, 2, 3. *John* xii. 38. with *Isai.* 1. *Mat.* ii. 5, 6. with *Mic.* v. ii. As for those others which are to be found in the *New Testament*, they are not far distant from the plain sense of the prophecies, as they lye in the *Old Testament*, as many of those passages are, which *Jonathan* applies to the *Messiah*. See his paraphrases on *Psal.* xxi. 1 ----- 8. 7, 8. lxxii. 1. *Isai.* xi. 1--6. xiv. 1. xvi. 1--5. xxviii. 5. *Jer.* xxx. 9. *Mic.* 8. *Zech.* iii. 8. iv. 7. From which passages I am apt to think, that there was no remarkable prophecy, but the *Jews* apprehended it some way or other, to belong to their *Messiah*.

I would ask our author, upon what scheme he will account for the application of these prophecies of the *Old Testament*, by the *Jews*, to the person and times of the *Messiah*, unless he allow that they really have a distant view; and that in the apprehension of the *Jews* they belonged to him? He is pleased indeed

Meny, p. 33. That any of the Jews,
 before the captivity, looked for a *deliverer*.
 now not for what reasons. There
 are some very ancient testimonies against
 this assertion, and, I think, at least of e-
 qual credit with his. The Chaldee para-
 phrase, on *Isai. lii. 13, 14.* thus com-
 ments, במה רסברו ליה בית ישראל יומין סגיאין
hold my servant the Messiah shall prof-
he shall be exalted ----- even as the
people of Israel have hoped for him many
years. And *Christ* told his disciples, *Mat.*
23. 8. *many prophets and righteous men*
desired to see those things which
ye see, and have not seen them ; and
ye hear those things which ye hear,
and have not heard them. And in a-
 nother place in particular, *John viii. 56.*
Abraham rejoiced to see his day.
that he saw it, and was glad. And
 one of his apostles tells us, *Job. xi. 41,*
Isaiah saw his glory, and spake
of him. And one ancienter than these,
 calling *the Messiah the desire of all*
nations, Hag. ii. 7. very strongly inti-
 mends that he was the desire of their
 hearts. Which is also positively assert-
 ed

ed by another ancient author ; who speaks of him, *as the Lord whom they sought, and that messenger of the covenant, in whom they delighted.* Mal. iii. 1. the former passages shew the expectations of the *Jews* before the captivity : The latter, their desires and expectations just after they were returned from it.

But whether any before the captivity expected a deliverer or not, how came the *Jews* to form such expectations after it ; and even to be so possessed with this hope, as to be ready to fall in with every person, that made pretensions to such a character ? Was it not owing to the then generally received interpretations of the scriptures by their teachers, and in consequence, to the plain intimations in the sacred writings themselves ; and because the current of the *Old Testament* scriptures naturally induc'd them to such a persuasion ? If our author will deny the *Old Testament* scriptures, as they were read and understood after the captivity, had any manifest reference to a future deliverer ; this universal strong expectation

of the *Jewish* nation is perfectly unaccountable upon any other supposition, than that of a special influence of divine providence, leading them to such a belief, as the time of his appearance drew nearer on. Or if he allows that the *Old Testament* writings, as they then appeared, did carry plain intimations of the coming of this extraordinary person ; and objects that *Esdra*s, and the *priests* with him, altered and added to the ancient prophecies, and gave them that reference which they now seem to carry to the times of the *Messiah* ; I would ask him, were those additions and alterations of *Esdra*s, made in the direction of God to him ? Then, if they now stand, they are prophecies of the *Messiah*, and were to have their full completion in him. But if *Esdra*s did it without any such supernatural Assistance : then our author must account for one very great difficulty ; *viz.* how *Esdra*s could, at such a distance of time, pretend to foretel the coming of a *deliverer* to the *Jews*, that God had given him no reason to expect, and almost fix the very time of his appearance, and give the most particular

lar descriptions of his person, doctrine, works, disgrace and glory, and entire undertakings; and how the event should exactly correspond with such random guesses and conjectures. Certainly to prophecy, in so very extraordinary a manner, about such a variety of important events without the gift of prophecy, is a much more unaccountable supposition, than that of the gift of prophecy itself.





CHAP. VII.

f the double Sense of Prophecies.



A M ready to allow the author of the *Grounds*, &c. that the prophecies applied by the *New Testament* writers to *Christ* might, in part, relate also to the times wherein they were first delivered. This I think is evidently true of that passage in *Isaiab*: the first part of which, *c. 7.* belongs more immediately to the deliverance, which was to come to pass within two years after the birth of *Isaiab*'s child; the latter part, *cap. 9.* to the more distant times of the *Messiah*, who was to be the glory and support of *David*'s throne and family. And therefore I add,

That

That there is no absurdity in the supposition, that as some prophecies may relate wholly to the times of the *Messiah*, so others may relate partly to his times, and partly to the times wherein they were delivered. God may order his prophet to speak in such words, as may denote a double event, and require a double accomplishment : or a message may be so expressed, as that the different parts of it may not the same words, may relate to very different seasons. These are two distinct considerations.

As to the first, God's ordering a prophet to deliver himself in such words, that they may literally denote a double event ; let it be considered, that the *literal Sense* is, either that sense, which the words naturally bear in connexion ; which, tho' it may not be the most obvious, and natural, yet the words will bear it, and the speaker of them really intended it. That words may bear a double sense, may be as properly expressive of one as another, is undeniably certain. Instances enough of this may be produced out of the *Old Testament*. Thus, *a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son*, as na

signifies, that an untouched maid
 should, by an extraordinary providence,
 become the mother of a child, as that a
 young woman should be married, and
 give with child by her husband. *Out of*
Egypt have I called my Son ; there is no-
 thing in the expression itself, to confine it
 either to the *Jewish nation*, than to Jesus
 Christ. The one is as much the literal
 sense as the other ; and which sense is in-
 tended, whether one or both, can only be
 known, either by its connexion with o-
 ther things, or by the plain and express de-
 claration of the speaker. This latter way
 is the most certain and infallible : and this
 is the authority we pretend to have as *Chris-*
tians, for interpreting many of the *Old*
Testament prophecies of *Christ* ; those es-
 pecially which he applies to himself, and
 those referred to him by his apostles, as
 the strongest proofs of his being the *Messiah* ;
 whatever reference they originally had, or
 may now be supposed to have to the times
 when they were first uttered. For as there
 is no reason to think that the persons, who
 originally delivered these prophecies, *spoke*
as they were moved by the spirit of
God ;

God ; so there is equal, if not stronger evidence, that those who apply them to *Christ*, as the proper proofs of his being the *Messiah*, were under the same divine influence ; and that therefore they were never have urged them as real proofs of his being the *Messiah*, they were never intended to predict the future, tho' I think there are but few instances of this nature to be found.

As to the latter ; that the different parts of the same prophecy may denote different events : this is a much more easy and probable supposition than the former ; especially if there be an agreement between the events themselves, and the more important event of the two, tho' at a distance was necessary to be preserved in the mind of those to whom the prophecy was delivered, the transition from the one to the other is very natural and proper. That mankind should be saved from the power of vice, and the dominion of evil spirits, and recovered by a Saviour to peace with God, and the hopes of an eternal inheritance, is a much more glorious work than the salvation of a particular nation from temporal evils, or their having a temporal

temporal prosperity conferred on them. and therefore what could be more worthy of God, or agreeable to his wisdom, than to put his people in mind, when he raised them up any temporal Saviours, that the time should come, when he would send into the world one, who should be the author of a more glorious redemption, causing righteousness, peace, and knowledge, more universally to flourish, and securing for them everlasting salvation.

It doth indeed seem necessary, that when these events are referred to in the same prophecies, the double intention of such prophecies should be *generally* understood ; otherwise the prophecies, as to one sense of them at least, would be of no use ; it being almost the same thing, not to foretell a future event at all, as to foretell it in a manner, as that no one is capable of understanding it. But this is not the case of the *Jewish* prophecies : which, they had a plain reference to the *Messiah* in part, as well as in part to events yet at hand, so were *also* understood by the *Jews*, as respecting him ; as I have pro-

ved, *chap. v, vi.* And therefore 'tis
 ly needful upon this head, to add; that
 many of them evidently had a double
 nification, so they had also a double
 and design: the one, to assure the Jews
 of God's present protection, notwithstanding
 the calamitous circumstances they were
 under: the other, to preserve alive in their
 minds the hopes of the *Messiah*, and
 better times to succeed under him. And
 indeed every promise of the *Messiah*, how
 far distant soever the time of his coming
 might be, was, nevertheless, a mighty
 encouragement to the faithful *Jews*. And
 this was giving them the strongest assur-
 rance, that, tho' for the present they might
 be reduced very low, yet they should not
 be utterly destroyed, because of the *Messiah*
siab who was to proceed from them.
 And of consequence those prophecies had
 a noble use, and could not be what
 fulfilled, *according to the literal sense* of
 of them, or in the sense the *Old Testam-*
ent will bear, and the author of them in-
 tended, in any other person than the
Messiah: and the application of these
 passages to him, will not be in a

, *allegorical sense*, but in *their natural and proper meaning, as they stand in Old Testament writings*.

to suppose, that those prophecies were intended of God to refer at all to the *Christ* of the *Messiah*, and that, according to the *literal sense*, they are in no way applicable to him; and yet that they were nevertheless applied by *Jesus*, and his *disciples*, to himself; argues either that the *Jews*, in the time of *Christ*, were strangely mistaken in their interpretation of their own scriptures; or that *Jesus*, and his apostles, put a false sense upon them, and contrary to what they were generally understood to mean; or that they never quoted them as real proofs of *Christ's* being the *Messiah*, but only in a way of accommodation, and as one would cite the words of any other author whatsoever. As to the first, I think nothing is more evident, than that the *Old Testament* writings were so far from leading as must necessarily have lead any person acquainted with them, to interpret of passages of some other time, and than any they might, in part, refer

refer to, just when they were delivered and therefore, having never seen the thing spoken of fully accomplished, the Jews might reasonably refer them to, and expect the intire completion of them in the person of the *Messiah*. And this in fact was, as I have shewn, the judgment and practice both of the ancient and modern *Jews*. That our Saviour and his apostles put a false sense on the scriptures, contrary to the generally received interpretation, cannot be allowed consistent with their characters, as inspired persons, or their conduct as wise men; it being impossible that this could have done them any service amongst the *Jews*, who had the highest veneration for their sacred writings, and for the interpretation given of them, by the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* of our Saviour's time. And as to their never quoting of them, as real proofs of things to happen to the *Messiah*, I think the contrary is most evidently certain from our Saviour himself, and his apostles. He ter him, often appealing to the scriptures, that the things they preached were to have been so. It therefore follows,

these passages, they cited as real
 fs, were properly and pertinently ap-
 ; and did belong to the *Messiah*, in
natural literal sense, as they stand
 the Old Testament, notwithstand-
 any reference they might have to
 person then in being, or shortly to
 e, after the prophecies were first de-
 ed.

might instance here in the frequent
 als made to the *Old Testament*, to
 how the death and resurrection of
 st, and the calling of the *Gentiles*,
 agreeable to the most plain decla-
 ns of the scriptures. But I rather
 e to insist on a passage, which the
 or of *the Grounds*, &c, tells us, can-
 e applied to *Jesus Christ*, without
great absurdity and contrary to the
design and intent of the prophet,
 . and shall I think demonstrate, that
 t might, in part, belong to *Isaiah's*
 yet it must also be supposed to re-
 the *Messiah*, in order to its full, li-
 accomplishment, and to answer the
 of the prophecy itself. And this
 ew, that some prophecies at least

have a double meaning, and that 'tis sometimes necessary it should be so. In that famous prophecy of *Isaiah*, ch. vii. 14. which *St. Matthew* i. 22, refers to the birth of *Christ* ; tho' it does not appear, that he cites it as a real prediction, or proper proof. *Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.* The occasion of this prophecy was the confederacy of *Rezin* king of *Syria*, with *Pekah*, king of *Israel*, against *Ahaz* king of *Judah*, their design to destroy the royal family of *David*, and to settle the crown of *Judah* on *Tabea'*, and his family. See verses 1, 5, 6. Now had this design taken effect, besides all the miseries brought on the kingdom of *Judah*, all the particular promises made to the family of *David*, and of consequence that of the *Messiah* had been entirely lost. And therefore God was pleased, in order to support the house of *David*, (see verses 2, 13.) to remove the fears of this invasion, and to prevent all such like attempts for the future, to give them a sign, both of a present and future deliverance.

rance, and of the perpetual establish-
 ment of *David's* throne and kingdom.
Isaiah ix. 7. The sign of both was
 to be the birth of a child. See *chap.*
 14, 15, 16. and *chap.* ix. 6. And
 therefore, as a virgin's conceiving, and
 bearing a son, seven hundred years after
 the prophecy was given, could be no pos-
 sible sign to *Ahaz* of a present delive-
 rance; so neither could the birth of a male
 child, to be born within a year or two,
 be looked on as a sufficient security, for
 the perpetual establishment of *David's*
 throne and kingdom. That the words,
 they stand in *Isaiah*, do, in their ob-
 vious literal sense, partly relate to a young
 man, in the days of *Ahaz*, our author
 would not have taken so much pains to
 prove. This, I believe, but few ever so
 much as doubted. But what I farther in-
 quire is, that this prophecy must also, in
 its full sense, refer to some other child, to be born
 long after the time of *Ahaz*; and that
 therefore it must necessarily have a dou-
 ble sense, in order to answer the design
 of it, and to have its full and proper ac-
 complishment. And that it hath so is

evident from the words themselves ; some of which can in no sense be applicable to *Isaiab's* child. For this prophecy reaches to the end of *chap.* ix. as is evident from the whole context. In *chap.* viii. 3. we find one part of the prophecy fulfilled, in the son born to *Isaiab* by the prophets : and God assures him *ver.* 4. that *before the child should be able to speak, both Damascus and Samaria should be plundered by the king of Assyria* : upon which, *ver.* 18. the prophet cries out, *Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel.* However, in the remaining part of the chapter he goes on to declare the miseries which should fall on the *Jews* for their sins, notwithstanding this present deliverance of *Ahaz* : and therefore to preserve them from being quite dejected, God was pleased to give them some foundation for hope by assuring them of a great deliverance which should hereafter be vouchsafed to them ; and then appeals to a sign of the same nature with that spoken of before in *chap.* vii. 14. and describes it in such a manner

that one would certainly conclude it to
 the individual child, mentioned in the
 mer place, were it not for some parti-
 r descriptions, which necessarily imply
 obler birth than that. *Unto us a child*
born : unto us a son is given. i. e.
 certainly as *Isaiab's* child, by the pro-
 fess, shall be born, whose birth is to be
 sign of their deliverance from this inva-
 ; so also a child shall hereafter be born,
the encrease of whose government and
ce, upon the throne of David and his
gdom, to order and establish it with
gment and with justice, there shall be
end. After which assurance the pro-
 returns to the particular occasion
 which introduced this prophecy, viz. the
 verance of *Judah*, and the *house* of
David, from the power of *Pekah*, and
Rezin. See chap. ix. 9, 11, 12.
 as the birth of *Isaiab's* child was
 mainly miraculous, as ordered and pre-
 ed by God ; so there is no absurdity
 supposing, that the same words chap.
 14. which predicted in so extra-
 ordinary a manner this birth, might al-
 be a prediction of the much more
 wonderful

wonderful birth of him, who was not only to be the sign of the establishment of *David's* house, but the great author of its continuance and glory ; even upon the supposition that this sense of this part of the prophecy could not be understood 'till the accomplishment of it. And what inclines me the rather to think thus is that then this prophecy will be an application of that original promise given to our first parents, *The seed of Woman* &c. One can scarce imagine any other reason of such an extraordinary character as this of the *womans seed*, but that the person denoted by this expression should come from a woman, without the concurrence and help of a man.

From hence I hope it will appear, that even this part of the prophecy, *Isa.* 14. may be understood of the *Messiah* and therefore of *Jesus Christ*, consistent with its main design and intention. I am that the other part of it contained in *Ch.* ix. 6, 7. cannot, without a manifest violence to the words, be applied to *Isaiah's* child ; nor to *Hezekiah*, as *Crotius* and *White* expound them ; nor

ed to any other child, but *Jesus Christ*,
whom the *first part* of the prophecy is
ly applicable ; and in whom *alone the*
part of it is verified and accomplish-

And as the birth of *Isaiab's* son, and
the consequent deliverance of *Judah* from
the threatned invasion, both happened ac-
cording to God's prediction ; so they had
reason to believe, from this experience of
his faithfulness and power, that notwith-
standing the present low circumstances
of *David's* family, yet some time or other,
a child should be born, who should re-
store the glory of his house, and in whom
the kingdom should be for ever establish-
ed. So that as the child spoken of was
to be a sign of a present deliverance, and
of the perpetual establishment of *Da-*
vid's house and throne ; it was so
far from being useless to *Abaz*, and
absurd in itself, that the prophecy should
refer to the times of the *Messiah*, that
it would indeed be absurd to suppose
that it should not : and therefore it is
with justice applied by St. *Matthew* to
Christ.

I wish

I wish this author, for his own sake would more impartially study, and honestly represent scripture passages, before he ventures to charge them with *absurdities*. I cannot help saying, tho' with him a better spirit, that his general method of quoting authors shews, either that he hath never read them or that he doth not understand them or which I am loath to believe of any man, does willfully misrepresent them. When he speaks of scripture at least instead of acting the part of a fair objector, he dresses it up in the most ridiculous manner he is able, and then declaims against it, as something very absurd and unreasonable ; and where one expects to find some authority for his assertions from his quotations, the passages prove directly the contrary as will afterwards more evidently appear.

From what hath been said on this head, I hope it doth not seem so great an absurdity, to suppose that prophecies may have a double reference, and infer a double accomplishment.

nt. For as, in both senses, they had
 tendency to confirm the faithful *Jews*
 the belief of God's providence, and
 hopes of his mercy, and the happy
 of his people, under the righteous
 gn and government of the *Messiah* :
 was therefore consistent with the divine
 dom they should have this double re-
 ence, and accomplishment. And this
 will appear yet still more evident, to any
 who considers the dependence which
 most ancient promises and prophe-
 of the *Old Testament* have upon each
 er. God promises to our first pa-
 ts a final deliverance from the ser-
 ts power. He afterwards assures A-
 ham, that in him all the families of
 earth should be blessed. *Jacob* pro-
 cies that *Shilo* should come, to whom
 uld be the gathering of the people. Mo-
 foretels the coming of a great and
 ty prophet who should arise to the
 s from amongst themselves. Was it
 reasonable to suppose, that as God had
 limited the promise of this great blef-
 , made from the foundation of the
 ld, to this nation ; so he would take
 care

care that they should not forget this promise to them ; and that upon all occasions he would put them in mind of the great and universal blessing he intended them ; and improve every temporal deliverance he vouchsafed them, to the raising their expectation of a nobler deliverance yet to come ? Upon this scheme, 'tis a wonder, that some prophecies should be of a mixed nature ; and that *Isaiah*, and the rest of the sacred writers, should be directed to speak in such a manner, as to predict events near at hand, and also at farther distance ; especially as the former were pledges and assurances of the latter and greater. †

† A late ingenious Author * thinks this double sense of prophecies not so easily defensible. He tells us, *prophecies so interpreted [as having a double sense] do afford no argument for any cause, since we cannot certainly discover them to have such a double sense, till this be proved by other inspired Men, whose authority is there supposed, as 'tis the very thing in question.* This is plausibly argued, he means a double sense intended by the very same words of the same prophecy ; of which senses one only is plain and obvious, and the other such as would never have been thought of, had it not been declared by a

* *The true Grounds and Reasons, &c.* p. 117. 118.

The reader will forgive me, if I
 have been a little tedious on this head;
 great deal of the present controver-
 sy

pretending to inspiration ; tho I think not altoget-
 her justly. For should any person, pretending to inspira-
 tion, give any new explication of prophecies, which, tho
 very obvious, yet was not contrary to the sense
 of the words of the prophecy ; I think the first enquiry
 of nature would be, concerning the proofs of
 inspiration ; and if these appear to be sufficient, we
 should allow his interpretations of scripture to be good.
 I freely own, it doth not appear probable, that pro-
 phesies in general should be intended to carry a double
 sense, and yet that there should be need of a new reve-
 lation to lead us into the knowledge of one of them ;
 especially the principal one, as in the present case, said
 to be intended. But tis a quite different thing, when the
 several parts of the prophecies relate to different events,
 and are so expressed, as to lead into this double sense ; as
 in the passage I have been considering, and indeed most
 of the prophecies of the *Old Testament* ; which seem ge-
 nerally to be of a mixed nature, and to refer partly to the
 present, and partly to some future time ; which never-
 theless were delivered in such a manner, as that both the
 words of providence were easy to be understood, and seem
 to have been generally apprehended by those, to whom
 they were first delivered, as well as by those who came af-
 ter them. And therefore we may justly argue, that they
 were well applied by *Christ* and his *apostles* ; not because they,
 inspired persons, did actually apply them, but because
 they were originally designed as real predictions of those
 things, they are urged as proofs of, and did very plainly
 fulfil them.

verſy depending on the right ſtating
 underſtanding of this matter. I ſhall
 ly beg his farther patience to obſerve
 with what juſtice and honeſty this writer
 compares the prophecies of the *Old Teſta-*
tament with the divinations and dreams
 of the *pagans* ; inſinuating that *Chriſti-*
nity as ſupported by theſe prophecies
 hath no better foundation than the whole
 religions of the heathens. The heathen
 oracles were delivered in the name of
 thoſe, whom I believe our author readily
 confeſs to be idols and not gods. Their
 divinations and prophecies were all
 built on the flight of birds, the entrance
 of beaſts, and ſuch like ſuperſtitious ;
 therefore no wonder their predictions
 were obſcure and uncertain, and uncapable
 of pointing out any one ſpecific
 particular event, ſince they were not dictated
 by an infallible ſpirit. Whereas
 as the prophecies of the *Old Teſtament*
 were delivered in the name of
 one God, the creator of heaven and
 earth, and were plain abſolute predictions
 of future events : many of which ac-
 tually came to paſs, exactly in

fixed ; and of the accomplishment
 which, those to whom the prophecies
 were delivered were witnesses : whence
 we had reason to conclude, that others,
 relating to more distant times, should,
 in like manner, be verified in their proper
 season. And as they were literally fulfilled
 in *Jesus Christ*, who was *approved by*
his words and wonders and miracles and gifts
of the Holy Ghost to be a real prophet ; it
 is a demonstrative proof of his being
 the true *Messiah*, and is a sufficient reason
 for our believing in him, and submitting
 to him as such ; as will be more largely
 treated in the ensuing chapter.





C H A P. VIII.

*The Old Testament
 prophecies fulfilled in Christ
 and in Him only.*



S many of the *Old Testament* prophecies have manifested a double reference, and were fulfilled in the *Jews* themselves, as well as in part to the *Messiah*; so several of them were never, according to the letter, as they stand in the prophetick writings, verified in any person then in being, when they were first delivered, nor in any person since, as far as we can learn from history, but *Jesus Christ*; who applied them to himself, and in whom they are accomplished in their true extent, according to the

New Testament account of him. before thus far at least the *Old* and *Testament* are not in an irreconcilable state, but have an entire agreement and connexion with each other ; and consequently in this respect the prophecies are confirmation of *Christianity*. Thus the grand and leading promise of all, and to confirm and illustrate which, the ensuing promises seem to have been given, *Gen.* 3. *I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel* ; appears to have a real accomplishment in *Jesus Christ*. The account the evangelists give of his birth answers to the character of *the woman's seed*. The *bruising of his heel*, however may be the full meaning of it, but mainly denotes some lesser hurt which he was to come to this *seed of the woman* by his *temptation* : which was verified in the suffering and death of *Christ* ; according to the words, *Luke* xxii. 53. *This is your hour, and the power of darkness*. But notwithstanding this, he was at last to *bruise the serpent's head* ; i. e. utterly to abolish and destroy his power. And what less

than this was the declared effect of *Jesu*
 death and resurrection? *Now*, saith *Chr*
is the judgment of this world, now
the prince of this world be cast out, La
 xii. 31. And one of his apostles, *ai*
 him, tells us, *That he took part of*
and blood, that thro' death he might
stroy him that had the power of death
that is the devil, Heb. ii. 14. And
 to the *enmity* spoken of, 'tis so very plain
 by every day's experience, that I need give
 no particular instances of it. The same
 so may be demonstrated of that promise
 God to *Abraham*, *that in his seed all*
families of the earth should be blessed
 which was never verified in any one particu-
 lar person 'till the times of *Jesus*. The *Jews*
 kings and priests, and prophets who were
 very great blessings to their own particu-
 lar nation: but none of them could, in a
 true, or literal sense, be said to be universal
 blessings, 'till the appearance of *Chr*
who, according to the *New Testament*
scheme, is the Saviour of a'l men,
under whom there is no more difference
Jew and Greek, but one Lord over
who is rich in mercy to all that call

7. Nor can those words of *Moses*,
ut. xviii. 18. be, with any justice, ap-
 plied to *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, or any of the
 succeeding prophets ; who in no respects
 could be said to be *like unto Moses*, either
 to the miracles they wrought, or the
 and design of their mission from God.
 And they were literally accomplished in
Jesus Christ ; who *did the works which*
no other man did ; and who was the author
 of a new dispensation, as *Moses* was, tho'
 much more excellent and perfect one ;
 who wrought out a deliverance for his
 people, as *Moses* did, tho' a much more
 efficacious and glorious one.

In the *Psalms* there are many passages
 of this nature, which cannot be interpret-
 ed with any sense, or appearance of
 sense, unless they are supposed to refer to
 the future season, and to have their pro-
 phetic accomplishment in some other person,
 any living at the time when they were
 uttered, and which do all of them exact-
 ly agree with the *New Testament* account
 of *Christ*. The 2^d *Psalms* is an instance of
 which, tho' in many things it may re-
 semble *David's* or *Solomon's* establishment

on the throne, yet in others cannot be applied to either of them, without the greatest hyperbole and violence. The words of it is penned in such terms, as manifestly describe some greater person than David, or any other of the petty kings of the little territory of *Judea*, and the importance to be given him was such, as no king that ever arose in *Judea*, was possessed of except *Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David, and the king of Israel, to whom all things are put in subjection, he only exalted who did put all things under him.* him also, and of him only, those words of *Plal. xlv.* are literally true : *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.---thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* Of what man, of what *Jewish* prince much less can these words in any tolerable sense be true? Which of them possessed an everlasting throne, or such vast dominion as to be worthy the name of God : or so prosperous a state, as to be superior to all his fellows? But how agreeable are these to the

Testament

ment descriptions of *Christ* ; who is
 both *Lord and king*, whose *throne*
alted above angels, and of whose *rule*
government there shall be no end ?
 to mention no more out of the
 ; let this writer explain, if he can,
 was that *Lord of David*, to whom
Lord said, set thou at my right hand,
I make thine enemies thy footstool.
Thou shalt rule in the midst of thy ene-
The Lord hath sworn and will not
t, thou art a priest for ever after the
of Melchisedeck, Psal. cx. Let
 shew, if he is able, one instance, in
 n, by God's special appointment, the
 and sacerdotal dignities were united,
 still continue to be united. If not,
 must acknowledge that the *Christian*
 ne furnishes us with an entire accom-
 ment of this prophecy, in the person
Jesus ; who is the *great high priest of*
profession, and who must reign as
'till all his enemies are put under
 : or feet.

be to mention all the passages out of
 how b, and the other prophets, to this
 the se, would be to transcribe their
 Testa

books. I have already given an instance of this, in that passage of *Isaiah* vii. applied by *Matthew* to *Christ*, chap. 22, 23. and I think shewn, that in a literal and obvious sense, the whole it may justly be referred to the *Messiah* and that part of it can be applied to one else. And therefore all the authorities which the author of the *Grounds* &c. quotes to prove the contrary, and to shew his great reading and learning might as well have been spared. The most exalted characters of that prophecy such as *the wonderful, counsellour, the prince of peace, the mighty God, the father of the future age*, are answered those descriptions of *Christ*, under the *New Testament*, that in him are *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Coloss. ii. 3. that he hath *reconciled us unto God, and preached peace to them that were afar off*, Eph. ii. 17. that he was *God manifested in flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. and that of him *whole family in heaven and earth named*, Eph. iii. 15. and therefore no wonder that other parts of this

as prophecy, which agree to him,
 should be applied to him by his apostles.
 the description given of *the Branch*,
which was to come out of the roots of
; upon whom the spirit of the
 was to rest, the spirit of wisdom
 understanding; who with righteous-
 was to judge the poor, under whose
 the fiercest natures were to be
 ed, and the most savage and cruel
 positions were to be rendred innocent
 harmless; who was to be *an ensign*
to the people, and to whom the Gen-
 were to seek, and by whom the
 of God's people, from the most
 nations, were to be recovered,
 xi. Was there any one of the house
 of David, in *Isaiah's* time, or since,
 whom these things can be, with any
 of truth, affirmed? events so very
 remarkable, that whenever they were to
 en could not be concealed. Let our
 or then acknowledge, that this pro-
 hath a farther reference, than to
 time when it was first delivered:
 if he can fix on any one person,
 the hour *Isaiah* spoke these words

to the time of *Jesus*, in whom they were, either as to the general sense, or the literal meaning of them, properly accomplished, I could almost promise to become a convert to his principles, how much soever at present I dislike them. But how exactly doth every part of the description answer to the character of *Jesus* and his religion? who was himself of the house of *David*; who had the spirit of God in the most excellent manner; who hath taught us to govern our passions, to look on every man as our brother, to forgive our enemies; by whom the *Gentiles* obtain salvation; and in whom both *Jews* and *Gentiles* have believed, in the most distant parts of the earth. The 35, 42, 49. Chapters contain the same prophecy, and many other passages of the like nature, are instances to the same purpose: where the working of miracles, the gathering of the *Gentiles*, and the exaltation of *one to be king and ruler, whom man despised, and the nation abhorred*, are spoken of: in as much as these things were then verified in any one living,

be allowed to be prophetick de-
 clarations of some future times, and e-
 ventually to be accomplished in *Jesus Christ*
 according to the New Testament account;
 that not in a mystical and allegori-
 cal sense, but in their natural and literal
 meaning, as they stand in the old testa-
 ment writings.

These passages which I have now quo-
 ted have their principal reference to the
 prosperity and glory of the *Messiah's* king-
 dom. In the last cited chapter indeed
 mention is plainly made of his being
scorned and despised, of his *labouring*
pain, and *spending his strength for*
death; of his being *abhorred by the na-*
tions and *becoming a servant of rulers*;
 of the same person are these things
 foretold, who was nevertheless *to raise up*
tribes of Jacob, to restore the preser-
vation of Israel; *who was to be a light to*
Gentiles, and God's salvation to
the ends of the earth; *whom kings were*
to worship, and *princes to worship*; *who*
was to be for a covenant to the peo-
ple and *to establish the earth, and*
to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

A strange mixture this in the character and circumstances of the same person, that he should be *a man abhorred of nation*, and yet *for a salvation to the ends of the earth*; that he should be *a servant of rulers*, and yet *a victorious prince*; that he should *spend his strength in nought* and yet *restore the preserved Israel, and become a light to the Gentiles*! In like manner doth the same prophet elsewhere describe him; as one *despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*; as one *stricken and smitten of God and afflicted*; as one *brought like a lamb to the slaughter, taken from prison and judgment, and cut off out of the land of the living*. And yet this same person was to *prolong his days*, and the *pleasure of the LORD* was to *prosper his hands*; he was to *see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied*, and to *have a portion divided him with the great, and to divide the spoil with the strong*; and that for this very reason, because he *poured out his soul unto death, and made intercession*

transgressors. Surely if these words
 have a plain literal meaning, they must
 signify, that the same person was to *suf-*
fer and dye, and yet to reign and prof-
 ess; to be a *triumphant conqueror, an*
overcomer and Saviour. And where a-
 mong the *Jews* will this author find a
 person, in whom all these different dis-
 tincti-
 ons meet? Strain them ever so far,
 they can never be applied to *Isaiab*, or
 any other than *JESUS of Nazareth*,
 who in such a strange figurative manner,
 our author, who seems to be mighty
 zealous for the literal sense, must think
 contrary to common sense and reason.
 In our blessed Saviour, how ex-
 actly and literally are they accomplish-
 ed; who tho' *despised* by his nation,
 became an universal blessing to
 all kind; tho' *abhorred of men* was
 loved by princes; tho' crucified and
 yet *prolonged his days*; and for
 once *suffering of death*, was de-
 clared to be *the author of eternal Sal-*
vation. And that these things were
 to happen to the *Messiah*, *Daniel* more
 expressly declares, *Chap. ix. 25, 26, 27.*
After

After threescore and two Weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself, and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be as a flood, and unto the end of the war the solations are determined. A prophecy so plain, and so exactly made good of Christ, that the Jews, to evade the force of it, are under the necessity of having recourse to a double *Messiah*, one whom was to suffer, and the other to reign and live for ever : a supposition that hath not one single text of scripture to support it. As for our author, instead of attempting to shew how this passage answers to any other event, the death of Christ, he slightly passes over, by telling us, that *Dodwell*, *Sir John Marsham* refer even this famous prophecy about the weeks to times of *Antiochus Epiphanes*. p. But have they produced any probable instance to which this passage will entirely agree ; or can our author shew any who pretended to be the *Messiah*, in the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes* ; who

off, but not for himself; and the consequence of which was the destruction of Jewish city and sanctuary, and an universal desolation ? The authority of *Well* and Sir *John Marsham* will signify little without proof ; nor have they shown any person, to whom this entire page is literally applicable. But all agree exactly to *Jesus* of *Nazareth* ; who took on him the character of the *Messiah* ; who *was slain*, but *not himself*, who prophesied of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which came to pass under *Titus Vespasian*, who burnt Jewish city and sanctuary, and who was the instrument of the divine vengeance upon the impious nation, for *crucifying the Son of life and glory*.

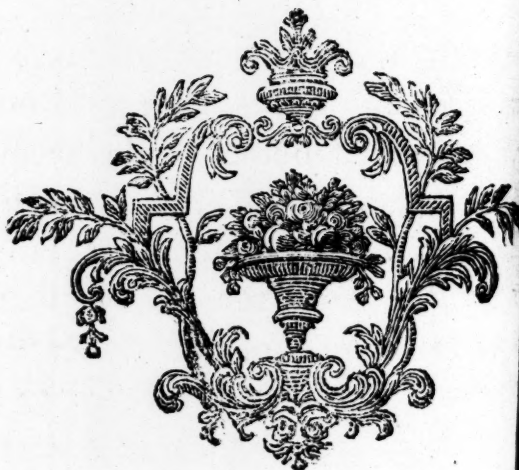
These prophecies which I have mentioned relate to the character of the *Messiah*, and describe the principal events that were to befall him. There are others which point out the particular time, or season of his appearance, which exactly answer to the time of our Saviour's appearance in the world, and agree to no one else but him.

Thus

Thus that famous prophecy of *Jacob* concerning his son *Judah*, in whatever sense it be taken, exactly agrees with the season in which *Jesus of Nazareth* dwelt upon earth. *The scepter shall depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be*, Gen. xlix. 10. The literal and most obvious meaning of these words this; that the tribe of *Judah* should never lose its authority, power and government, after having once received it, till the coming of a certain person called *Shiloh*; and that he should in some way or other *gather the people or nations* to himself. The principal thing predicted is, the coming of *Shiloh* and that the time of it should be before *Judah* should cease to be a distinct government; but however, at the decay of its authority and power, and that he should gather the people to himself. So that if ever *Shiloh* came, it must be before, but not long before, the Jewish power was destroyed. But no person was there, who pretended to extraordinary

ordinary character, and gathered the
 le to himself, at this season, besides
Christ? after whose resurrection,
 cepter did soon depart entirely from
 h; and who gathered both *Jews*
Gentiles into one church, under
 elf, their proper head and governour?
Isaiah's prophecy about the weeks is al-
 own by Dr. *Prideaux* to accord ex-
 to the time of *Christ*. And as for
Isaiah and *Malachy*; they do expressly
 re, that the *desire of all nations*,
messenger of the covenant should
 e, during the standing of the second
 le; prophecies which have not had
 shadow of an accomplishment, but in
Christ. And the *Jews* them-
 s are so sensible of the strength of
 argument, that they are forced to al-
 the sins of the people, as a reason,
 God hath deferred the coming of the
Messiah beyond the time expressly fixed
 e prophets. Accordingly the *Chal-*
dean paraphrast on *Micah*, v. 8. thus com-
 s. Oh *thou the Messiah of Israel*
 But *וְשָׁמַר מִן קִדְּם הוּבִי כְנֻשָׁתְךָ* *who art bid be-*
ware of the sins of the congregation of Zi-

on ; *to thee shall come the king*
 hereby charging God, and their own
 phets, with falsehood, rather than
 the accomplishment of the prophecies
Jesus Christ, and submit to his au-
 rity and government.



CH



C H A P. XI.

the Corruption *of*
S C R I P T U R E.



THE argument drawn from the several passages cited in the foregoing chapter when put together, and giving light to each other, is this : that the books of the *Jews*, tho' penned by different persons, and at distances of very remote from each other, yet in plain predictions of things which were not to come to pass till after ages ; they all unanimously agree in describing a certain person, who was to come of *Judah's* tribe, and from *David's* family, who, tho' he was, for a while, to be subject to great disgrace and grie-

vour's sufferings, yet was to reign in righteousness, to overcome all his enemies, to bring redemption to his people, to *a light to the Gentiles, and God's salvation to the end of the earth*; that was to come before, tho' but a little before, the desolation of the *Jewish* government and polity, and during the standing of the second temple; that about this time the *Jews* were in expectation of such a saviour; and that this very season there did actually arise a person, who, by the sanctity of his life, the excellency of his doctrines, and greatness of his miracles, did prove himself to be *sent of God*; that he did declare himself also to be the person intended in these prophetick descriptions; that these descriptions, tho' in some things seemingly repugnant to each other, were exactly accomplished in him, as far as they related to his person, and the particular time of his appearance; or as far as they then could be, or were intended to be accomplished, and which therefore appear plainly reconcileable to each other, that there is not one single circumstance

ch renders the accomplishment of
 the distant prophecies, in him, impossi-
 ble or unlikely ; and that these prophe-
 cy descriptions, were interspersed and
 mixed with other plain predictions, which
 were actually verified and accomplished
 in their proper seasons. This I say is the
 argument. And what is the thing to be
 proved by it ? Not the *divine mission* of
Jesus Christ, which doth not stand on the
 foundation of prophecy ; but the *Messiah-*
ship of Jesus, or that he was this particu-
 lar person spoken of in the *Jewish* writ-
 ings ; which must be proved by prophecy,
 which cannot be so well proved by
 other arguments whatsoever. And I
 think the argument in this light is so strong
 and conclusive, as that it cannot be evad-
 ed but by supposing, as our author frank-
 ly confesses he doth, that the writings of
 the *Old Testament* have been corrupted ;
 that there have been so many inter-
 ruptions, as that one can scarce know a-
 nything of the original books, by what
 have remaining now. Supposing it
 for true, that there are some very
 great corruptions in the *Old Testament*
 writings ;

writings ; this will do our author's no service, unless he can prove that they were made by *Christians*, and that the predictions relating to Christ, were made after the event ; for the manifest agreement and correspondence of the events recorded in the *New Testament* writings to the things predicted in the *Old* will give such a credit to *Christianity*, that the enemies of it will never be able to weaken, unless they can prove that the predictions were forged, and inserted into the *Jewish* writings, after the event. And this seems to be our author's supposition, tho' he elsewhere contradicts him-
p. 112. &c. For he tells us plainly, *that the great clearness of prophecies has ever been deemed a mark among intelligent people, whether be'lievers or unbelievers in prophecy, that they have been made after the event.* I doubt not but our author is one of these very intelligent persons, a thro' unbeliever in prophecies, and firmly determined to account all the prophetick passages of the *Testament* forged and interpolated, which have a plain and manifest refer-

and accomplishment in *Jesus Christ* ;
 I confess, I do not understand (our
 Lord, in his *great intelligence*, may in-
 volve) how a person can be a believer
 in prophecy, and yet believe every plain
 prophecy made after the event. How-
 ever, he hath taken care to preclude all
 possibility of being convinced himself of
 the truth of prophecies, and is so extra-
 ordinary *intelligent*, as to resolve to pre-
 judge, at all hazards, in his infidelity. If
 there be any difficulty or obscurity in pro-
 phesies, and their application to their
 particular events doth not seem so very
 plain and easy ; then he is so *intelligent*
 as to think them only *allegorical, mysti-
 cal, typical proofs*, i. e. that they prove
 nothing at all : but if they are
 plain and easy to be understood, and do
 presignify the coming of any fu-
 ture event ; why then also it seems that
 intelligent persons think them *forged, and
 made after the event*.

tantumne rem tam negligenter ?
 intelligent persons use to judge thus
 without sufficient reason, or contrary to
 the plain appearance of evidence ? Will

our author himself affirm, that all the passages of the *Old Testament*, which seem to have a reference to, and their accomplishment in *Jesus Christ*, are interpolations? Let him then give probable reasons when, and by whom these interpolations were made; and particularly that they were made after the event. 'Tis allow'd that plain prophecies with their exact completions, are matters very credible, without very great attestation, *p.* 137; tho' this is no extraordinary discovery of our author, since persons of common intelligence know, that as the belief of all past depends on testimony, so those facts be more or less credible, according to the nature and weight of such testimony. But I cannot agree with him when he tells us, (*Ibid.*) that it seems most natural, upon the first view of a prophecy plainly fulfilled, to suppose the prophecy made for the sake of the event, or the prophecy and event invented. The reason which seems is his unprejudiced unbiassed way of thinking and acting; to pass his judgment before enquiry, and to conclude

prophecies as cheats, without examining whether or no they are real. Other persons, of less intelligence than our authors, would possibly think themselves obliged, before they made any determination at all, to enquire, when the things, to be prophecies, were delivered, and when their accomplishment is said to have happened, and to consider the agreement between the prediction and its completion. If they find the same proof and evidence that the prediction was prior to the accomplishment, as they find for the difference of time between any other two past events; I think they will be under the same obligation to believe one as the other; or else testimony must not be allowed to be a sufficient reason for belief, and so past facts obtain no credit amongst men.

But however, our author will have it, 135. *That the books of the Old Testament are greatly corrupted, i. e. that they have been changed from what they were, and that they proceeded from the authors of them.* I own many literal errors have happened thro' frequency of transcribing,

transcribing, as happens also to all other ancient books. But the question is not as to this ; but whether the *Old Testament* hath been wilfully corrupted, by wicked and designing men ; either by cutting particular passages out of it, or interpolating others into it. As to the *Pentateuch*, or book of the law ; he tells us *p. 138. that it must, in a particular manner, have been liable to great alterations and to such as hinder us from discerning now, what truly belongs to Moses, from that which hath been added by those who succeeded him.* And for this assertion assigns two reasons : the one a reason which seems to destroy itself ; and the other, if not a falsehood, yet what he can never be able to prove. The first is, that the books of the law were much neglected by the *Jews*, because very much prone to idolatry. But may we not argue, that if the law was very much neglected by idolatrous *Jews*, it must have been, on a parity of reason, as much valued by those of them, who worshipped the Lord of *Israel* only ; and that therefore they would be particularly careful to preserve

all other sacred books, which contained the
 on is not the sole ritual of divine worship, free from
ld Telle remarkable alterations and corruptions?
 oted, besides, the neglecting these books can
 er by can be the reason of their being corrupt-
 or inter as to those who actually corrupted
 he *Pentateuch*. They knew their contents too
 e tells us; and therefore if any designing ido-
 u'ar manous priests took occasion, from the ge-
 teration of neglect, to corrupt the *Pentateuch*,
 discerning must have been with a design to render it
 oses, favourable to the cause of idolatry, to
 those which the *Jews* were so strongly inclined.
 Assertion if our author can, in one instance,
 e a real one, that the *Pentateuch*, as it now
 and the is, hath any such tendency, I'll give
 at he will up the entire controversy.

First is, that as to the other reason he mentions;
 ch neglect *the Jews were reduced, for a conside-*
 uch pro *time, to one copy, which was also lost*
 argue, *that the contents of it were be-*
 eeted by *unknown*; this I take to be an asser-
 e been, without any foundation to support it.
 ed by the place he cites, *2 Kings xxii.* proves
 e Lord King like it; but only that as they were
 refore during the temple, *Hilkiah*, the high
 to pres found that copy of the book of the
 law

law which had been repositied (see 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14.) by *Moses's* command) see Deut. xxxi. 26.) in the side of the ark of the covenant. It seems probable indeed that *Josiah*, beginning his reign very young when he was but eight years old, had not at this time, read over the book of the law ; but hearing that the original copy which was deposited in the temple, was found, commanded it to be read ; and when he understood how dreadful the threatnings of God were, towards the *Jews*, if they turned aside to idolatry, he was exceedingly surprized, and willing to avert the threatned judgment from himself and people. But that they had the law in use before this, is evident from that reformation which was made throughout the whole kingdom, by the means of the king and high priest, before this accident, which could not have been brought to perfection, or settled on any good foundation, without the law of the Lord to direct them : besides that 'tis expressly said of *Josiah's* goodness, that it was according to that which was written in the law of the Lord, 2 Chron. xxxv. 26. And it is to be

whole history of the Jews, in the
 Testament writings, is a proof that
 law was never lost; tho' under the
 of idolatrous kings, it was, by some,
 much neglected. Thus *David* prays
Solomon, Only the Lord give thee
Wisdom----- that thou mayst keep the
law of the Lord thy God. Then shalt
thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfill
the statutes and judgments which the
Lord charged Moses with, 1 Chron. xxii.
 13. or as 'tis elsewhere expressed, and
the charge of the Lord thy God-----
it is written in the law of Moses,
 Deut. vi. 1. In the reign of *Asa*, 'tis ex-
 pressed, *that the priests taught in Ju-*
dah, and had the book of the law of the
Lord with them, 2 Chron. xvii. 9. In
 the reigns of *Joash* and *Amaziah*, we al-
 so find that *Mose's* law was in being, 2
 Chron. xxiii. 18. xxiv. 6. and xxv. 4.
 In the reign of *Hezekiah* also, the grandfather of
Manasseh, 'tis said, that *the priests stood in*
the place after their manner, according
to the law of Moses, the man of God,
 2 Chron. xxx. 16. And again, *that he*
returned to the Lord, and departed not from
following

following him, but kept his commands, which the Lord commanded Moses. And again that he appointed the king's portion of his substance, for the burnt offerings, viz. for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offering for the sabbaths, and for the new moon and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the Lord, viz. Numb. xxv. And the reason assigned for the captivity of the Israelites by the king of Assyria, in the fourth year of Hezekiah king of Judah, is, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed the covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, 2 Kings xviii. 12. Isaiah also, who prophesied in the days of Uzziab, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, speaks of the law, not only as a thing in being, but to which the people might have constant recourse. To the LAW, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to THIS WORD, it is because there is no light in them, Isai. vi. 20. other places might be mentioned. And that the losing of the law is a fiction of the author's, and therefore cannot be un-

a reason of its corruption. Besides, it was the business of the prophets to preserve the worship of God amongst the Jews, as *Moses's* law directed; there is abundant reason to believe they kept their book uncorrupt and entire.

And as to any alterations made either in these, or any other books of the *Old Testament*, by *Esdras*, to me there seems but little reason for such a supposition. That he might collect the several dispersed writings of the prophets, collate the several manuscripts of them then extant, purge them from any errors that might have crept into them, thro' the negligence of transcribers, and so fix the text and true reading, for the use of future ages, seems reasonable enough: a work he was every way fit for, whether we consider him as already scribe in the law of *Moses*, To vii. 6. or as a prophet under the inspiration and direction of the spirit of God. But that he altered the sacred books, from what they were before, seems a little incredible, because 'twill be hard to assign any probable reason which could induce him to do it. That the

the *Pentateuch*, or the books of the law were the same as they were before. It seems probable enough from many places. Thus *Joshua*, and others, built the altar of God, *as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God*, *Ezra* iii. 2. and fixed the bases of the altar and offered the daily sacrifices, and kept the feasts of tabernacles and new moon *as it is written and according to custom*, ver. 3, 4, 5. And in *Nehemiah* chap. viii. 4. 'tis said that *the people desired Ezra, the scribe, to bring this book of the law, which the Lord had commanded to Israel, which Ezra brought, and publicly opened, and read out of in the sight and hearing of all the people*. There was not in the people the least suspicion of a corrupted, altered, mangled book. They called for that ancient which God delivered to *Moses*, and he read to them. And undoubtedly there were some amongst that numerous assembly, who would have known and discovered the matter, had *Ezra* made any considerable alterations in it. And we read farther, that when the foundation

the temple were laid, *the priests were in their apparel with trumpets, and Levites, the sons of Asaph with Cymbals, to praise the Lord after the ordinance of David king of Israel.* Now this we have nowhere recorded, but in the book of *Chronicles*, where we have a particular account of this matter; and 'tis therefore probable they had this book to recourse to.

And as for the books of the prophets, which are the most express predictions of future times; there is much less reason to suspect them of being altered by any. For as these prophecies were delivered publicly; so they were committed to writing, by God's express command, to the prophets themselves, in order that they might be preserved; according to the direction of God to *Isaiah*, xxx. 8. *Write it before them in a table, and in a book, that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever.* See also *chap. 1.* Thus also did *Jeremiah* by God's command. See *chap. xxv. 13.* and *xxxvi. 1, 2, 28.* *Ezekiel* xliii. 11. *Habbakuk* 2. And undoubtedly this was practi-

ced by them all, that their prophecies might be of more general and lasting use among the people. Now the prophets, all but very few, lived either but a little before the captivity, or during the time of it, after it. *Isaiah*, whose prophecies of the *Messiah* are most frequent and express, lived under the reigns of *Hezekiah* and *Manasse*, which was about fifty years before the captivity. *Jeremiah* succeeded him in the prophetick office, and prophesied from the reign of *Josiah*, who was but two years after the death of *Manasseh*, throughout the days of *Jehoiakin*, to the end of *Zedekiah's* government, and the carrying away of *Jerusalem* captive; and even during many years of the captivity itself. *Ezekiel* prophesied from the middle of the captivity and onwards. *Daniel* under *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Belshazzar* his son, *Darius* his successor, until the days of *Cyrus*, to whom commenced the restoration of the *Jews*, from their long captivity. *Haggai*, *Zerubbabel*, *Jesaias* and *Malachi*, encouraging them to rebuild their city and temple; and to dis-

and after them, probably *Ezra*, and some
 w others, to settle them in their lands,
 model their government, and to esta-
 blish the worship of God amongst them,
 according to the law of *Moses*, and the
 direction of former prophets. Now it is
 not probable, that in such a small number
 of years, as intervened between *Isaiab*,
 and the time of the last prophets, the wri-
 tings of *Isaiab*, and *Jeremiah*, and the
 others, should be entirely lost; and the less
 so, because in their writings there were
 almost express promises, to be faithful
 to the laws, of their restoration from their
 dejected captivity, and of glorious times
 to succeed, when they should be brought
 back to their own land and country.
 These prophecies must have been the
 great comfort and support of the pious
 Jews, during the continuance of their
 captivity: and I doubt not but that
 they read them themselves, and rehear-
 ed them to their children, to inspire
 them with hopes of a glorious return
 from their long forsaken and desolate
 country. Or if the generality of the
 Jews disregarded these prophecies, in

which they were so much concerned yet 'tis reasonable to think, that the succeeding prophets took special care to preserve them from being lost, or, in considerable instances, altered or corrupted. So that there is no ground to think that *Ezra*, either could, or would alter any of the writings of the *Testament*. For as he had not any opportunity to do it, so neither can I imagine there could be any probable reason to induce him to it. Possibly he revised them, mended the faults of copies already taken, ordered more to be transcribed, for the use and benefit of the people, divided them into sections, ordered the stated regular reading of them on the sabbath day; that the people being continually instructed in the law of God, might be more effectually restrained from idolatry and vice.

As for that other reason our author mentions, *p.* 139. 'tis a thing that carries a face of prodigious improbability, that I cannot think he would have urged it, if he not, at all hazards, resolved to represent

ristianity, even when he suspected the
 length of his own arguments to disprove
 the truth of it. His argument in short is
 ; *that the Jews were departed from
 the unity of one God, and went ido-
 lers into Chaldea: that the Chaldeans
 worshipped one God, and instructed the
 Jewish youths of quality in this doctrine ;
 and that because the Chaldean kings or-
 dained such a belief and worship amongst
 them, the Jews changed their own noti-
 on for those of their masters, and cor-
 rected their own writings to make them
 agree with those of the Chaldeans, as to
 worship, history and antiquity. These
 assertions which he hath not one tes-
 timony or reason to support, and which
 contradict the entire design, both of the
 Jewish religion and writings ; which
 they where suppose, and inculcate the
 doctrine of one God ; a doctrine as an-
 cient as the first founder of the Jewish
 religion, and from which the best and
 most of the Jews never departed, even
 during the time of the grossest idolatry ;
 a doctrine inculcated by all the pro-
 phets, thro' the successive reigns of their*

several kings, and for their departure from which, they were carried captive into *Chaldea*, where they learned, not the unity of God, but, from their sufferings, the necessity of worshipping him and him only. The review of the great calamities they had brought upon themselves and country, by their idolatrous apostasy from God, was that which gave that thorough turn to their minds, and kept them from relapsing into their ancient superstitions : not their dwelling in *Chaldea* ; where the unity of God was not so firmly believed, but that they worshipped idols, *Isaiab* xlv. 1. xlv. 13. *Jer.* l. 2. *Dan.* iii. 1, 2. and even their very kings, *Dan.* vi. 7. who were so far from ordaining the belief and worship of one God only, as that they inflicted the severest punishment on those, who would not comply with their idolatrous decrees. Instances of which we have *Daniel*, and the *Three Children*.

I am glad to find however, that the author acknowledges, p. 140. that the books of the *Chaldeans* give a relation of matters, from the creation to

me of *Abraham*, very little different from that contained in the *Pentateuch*; which is to me little less than a demonstration of the antiquity, authority, and purity of those books, but no proof that one of those accounts was borrowed from the other. Criticks generally allow, that when ancient copies agree, 'tis a very good sign of the purity and genuineness of any book : And 'tis also of the truth and truth of an historical account, when the most ancient records of different nations give exactly the same. It is thus with respect to the *Chaldeans* and *Arabs*, both originally of the same country and family. *Abraham*, undoubtedly, handed down to his posterity a genealogical account of those, from whom he descended. But 'tis ridiculous to suppose, that *Abraham* was the only man in all *Chaldea*, who kept such an account ; it is more rational rather to think, that he had a copy from the original record, which he left behind him : and therefore his original account, or any faithful extract from it, was preserved amongst the *Chaldeans*, 'tis impossible but that

the *Jewish* and *Chaldean* history to *Abraham* must agree ; and their agreement may be looked on as a very strong argument of their being authentick and genuine. So that there is no need of supposing, as our author doth, *p.* 140. either that the conquerors must receive their history from the slaves, or the slaves from the conquerors ; because the histories of both the nations were originally the same, and therefore, as far as they were true, must both necessarily agree ; one can scarce imagine, supposing either *Chaldean* or *Jewish* history to have been altered, that the *Jews* should alter theirs in compliance to the *Chaldeans*, who burnt their city, destroyed their temple, made their country desolate, and detained their nation in a long Captivity. These calamities made them entertain resentments too deep, ever to comply with their cruel Masters in any thing, but what they were absolutely constrained to. Nor less would they consent to corrupt or alter those writings, which they held sacred, and delivered to their nation by God himself. And thus our author

th, contrary to his own design, render'd
probable, that the *Pentateuch* was a ge-
ne and uncorrupted book at the time
the captivity.

And after the reading of the law and
phets in the *synagogues*, which began
on after the *Jews* return out of *Chaldea*
to their own land, grew into use and
constant custom, the alteration and cor-
ruption of the sacred writings became still
more impracticable. For the *Jews*, who
had the highest veneration for them, and
were constant auditors, would soon have
perceived it, had there been any materi-
al passages left out, or any other confi-
derable ones inserted; and would ne-
ver have submitted to such known and
manifest corruptions of them. Besides as
the *Synagogues* grew numerous, so also
the copies of the *law*; and conse-
quently the difficulty of corrupting
them was the greater. And tho' our
author thinks that numerous changes
were introduced into the *Old Testament*
by the *Masorites*; I think
the contrary seems rather probable;
on account of the superstitious care they
took

took about the sacred books ; numbering not only the verses, but the words, letters, consonants, and points, and marking the various readings, and every thing that was peculiar either in the words or sense. Had these criticks lived after *Christ*, they would have had some temptation to have corrupted their books, but they might not have appear'd too plain in favour of *Christianity* ; but as they wrote long before this, and so could have no inducement to alter them, it is reasonable to think, that their scrupulous care about the sacred books was the effect of the deepest veneration for them, and a desire to preserve them free from the least corruption. Since therefore it appears probable, that no considerable alterations happened to the books of the *Old Testament* before *Christ*, and the author himself will not allow to *Whiston* that they were corrupted, in order that he may fix on the *Apostles* the charge of citing and applying them allegorically and impertinently ; I think I may reasonably conclude, that many prophecies contain'd in them

ing to the *Messiah*, having so exact agreement with the character of our Lord, and being literally accomplished in him, do sufficiently prove all that they are ever cited to prove, *viz.* that he was the *Messiah* whom the *Jews* expected, and therefore abundantly justifies us in acknowledging him as such, in believing and obeying his Gos-

possibly some may think I have been long on this head, and that our audience ought to have assigned the reasons of this supposition, that the scriptures are corrupted, and tell us when and where, by whom, and with what view this was done, before he deserves any reply.

I confess that general charges and unsupported suppositions ought to have no weight or regard with any considerate person.

But as he seems to think that he has given some *shrewd hints* upon this subject, and speaks with the greatest assurance of the corruption of scripture; I thought it certain and undeniable; I was obliged to examine into this matter with greater carefulness; and I own that the

the more I think of it, I am the more fully convinced, that the books of the *Testament* are, as to the main and material parts, genuine and uncorrupted, in lesser matters possibly some errors have happened to them.



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C H A P. X.

*Concerning the particular
Prophecies applied by
CHRIST to himself*

THE reader will observe that the particular prophecies I have insisted on, in the foregoing chapter, as relating to *Messiah* in the *Old Testament*, and to and verified in *Christ*, and in him are such as respect principally those events of his sufferings, death, resurrection, and universal kingdom over *Jews* and *Gentiles*. That these things should at some or other come to pass, is foretold in the most plain and express manner ;
and

and they are spoken of as circumstances distinguish, from all other, some particular person and season. And consequence when they all of them agree to, and are verified in any one particular person, and such a one declares himself to be *the very person* intended in such prophecies ; those prophecies then become proper and certain proofs that he was the person spoken of, and therefore justly urged and applied to such.

I therefore add, and I think 'tis an observation of some weight in this controversy, that the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, which *Christ* applies to himself as proper and demonstrative proofs of his being the *Messiah*, are such as relate to those great events of his suffering, resurrection, and universal kingdom. It is evident indeed that he doth upon other occasions make use of scripture passages in a more lax and general manner laying little stress upon them, and not treating them as certain and convincing proofs of his being the *Messiah*, but with

different intention and view. Thus
 sometimes he quotes passages out of the
Testament for the proof of some dis-
 tinguished or denied truth ; as when he argued
 with the Sadduces for the truth of a future
 life, from those words of God, *Exod. iii.*
I am the God of Abraham, and the
God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.
 Sometimes he quotes them as descriptive
 and applicable to the circumstances of
 his own time, and the temper of the peo-
 ple amongst whom he conversed ; as when
 he applies to the *Jews* that passage in the
 book of *Esaias* xxix. 13. *Ye hypocrites*
did Esaias prophecy of you, or how
may I apply to you what Esaias
prophesied, or declared of the Jews in
his time, This people draws nigh to me
with their mouth, &c. And in that
 place *Mat. xiii. 14.* *In them is*
fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which
says, by hearing ye shall hear and
understand, &c. which is no more
 to say, that that prophetick de-
 clARATION of the *Jews* in *Esaias* time,
 is true of the *Jews* in our Saviour's
 time ; and they are cited as a prophe-
 cy,

cy, not because those words predicted this particular event, but because they were originally delivered by a prophet and were part of a message he had received by inspiration from God. Sometimes he quotes scripture, by way of simile and illustration. Thus he tells the Jews that he would give them no sign that of *Jonas the prophet*. For as *Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*. No man of ingenuity can imagine that our Saviour urges the former event, as a proof of the latter, but that he only intends to teach us so much, that the deliverance of the son of man from the grave should be as wonderful, as the deliverance of *Jonas* from the whale's belly ; and as true a declaration of his being the *Messiah*, the other event was of *Jonas's* being a prophet, and under the special and protection of Heaven. And with the same view, he elsewhere declares, *that as Moses, lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so*

of man be lifted up, John iii.
 Sometimes he makes use of the
 of scripture to express his own sense
 meaning; and we shall find that they
 the most proper, that could be u-
 on such occasions. Thus he orders
 his disciples to carry back this message
 to his master, *The blind receive their
 sight, the lame walk, the lepers are clean-
 sed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised
 and the poor have the gospel preach-*
ed to them; or as the words, $\pi\lambda\omega\chi\omicron\iota\ \epsilon\upsilon-$
 $\gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha\iota$, may be render'd *good ti-*
ngs are preached to the meek. Mat. xi.
 only referring to these two prophe-
 xxxv. 6. and lxi. 1. And what
 is a more proper answer than this;
 at the same time he gave them the
 substantial proofs of his mission from
 heaven and put them in mind of the pre-
 sence of their own prophets, who
 foretold that these things should come to
 pass in the days of the *Messiah*? Upon
 other such like occasions,
 our Saviour oftentimes cites the
 ancient writings, and every one
 who reads these quotations with any

care will find, that they are brought in as things meerly incidental, and by way rather of illustration, than argument or proof; at least that they are not urged as *the only proofs* of the truth of his pretensions to be a prophet from God, or *Jews Messiah*. But when ever he properly appeals to the *Old Testament*, and applies any particular passages from it to himself, to prove himself to be *Christ*, we shall find they are such as relate to his sufferings, resurrection, pouring forth the spirit, and universal kingdom; because these things were in the most plain and express terms predicted of him, and because their being understood by the *Jews* was necessary to remove the prejudices they had conceived against him. And as to the passages, we shall find they are all in the strongest terms. Thus before our Saviour's last journey to *Jerusalem*, he began to shew his disciples $\delta\tau\iota \delta\epsilon\iota \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu \pi\alpha\theta\epsilon\iota\nu$, *that it was necessary the son of man should be killed, and be raised again the third day*, Mat. xvi. 21. viz. in

accomplishment of the scripture prophecies; as he himself expressly told his disciples, after his resurrection, and but before his ascension into heaven, *Luke* 24, 44, 45, 46, 47. *And he said unto them, these are the words which I have said unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the scripture. i. e. gave them the true interpretation of many of the ancient prophecies, relating to the Messiah: and in conclusion added, Thus it is written that thus it behoved Christ to suffer; καὶ τοῦτο χρὴ τὸν Χριστὸν παθεῖν, it was necessary that Christ should suffer, viz. because it was written that Christ should suffer, rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Where it is to be observed, that Christ appeals to some things, not merely as prophetically set forth, but as expressly*

written in the *Old Testament* ; that *was necessary these things should be fulfilled* ; and that these things were, *that the son of man should suffer, and rise again from the dead, and that the gospel should be preached to all nations.*

when he urges, not only the general sense, and import of the scripture, but applies any particular passages, as telling what should happen to the *Messiah*, and which he now declares necessary to be fulfilled ; they are such as have manifest reference to the same thing. See *Mat.* xxvi. 31. 54. *Mark* ix. and xii. 10. *John* vii. 38. xiii. 18. 25. xvii. 12. which I think are all the places where our Saviour applies the *Old Testament* prophecies expressly to himself. So that as these things were literally predicted of the *Messiah*, were literally accomplished in *Christ*, and were therefore justly applied by *Christ* to himself, and were solid evidence of his being the *Messiah*. The manner of his outward condition, his being rejected by the rulers and teachers of the *Jews*, and condemned and

as an impostor and seducer of the
 ple, were the great objections to the
 of his being the *Messiah* ; of
 it was prophesied, that he should
 victorious prince, and rule and reign
 ever : which objections against him
 be no otherwise removed, but
 hewing from their own scriptures
 these things were to happen to the
Messiah.

and this also we shall find was the me-
 the apostles took, when they preach-
 the *Jewish* synagogues, and proved
 scripture that *Jesus* was the *Christ* :
 ever other passages they might, ei-
 in their Epistles to mixed churches, or
 discourse with the *Jews*, who ac-
 ledged their reference to the *Mes-*
 siah to *Jesus* ; yet those prophe-
 they laid the main strength on, were
 that related to the death and resur-
 of the *Messiah*, and the preaching
 gospel to the *Gentiles*. Nor shall
 d one single instance to the con-
 in any one of their publick discour-
 where they cite the *Old Testament*,
 throughout the whole acts of the

Apostles. Thus *Peter* in his first sermon to the *Jews* speaks of the descent of the holy spirit, and the resurrection of *Christ* as expressly predicted by the prophets, and speaking of his sufferings says, *Things which God before had shewed, the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.* Acts ii. 16. &c. iii. 18. Thus *Paul* went unto the *Jewish* synagogues in *Jerusalem*, and reasoned with them of the scripture, *Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead,* xvii. 3. And in his defence before *Agrippa*, a *Jew* by profession, he declares, *having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing to small and great, saying none other things than those, which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should rise first, that he should shew light unto the people to the Gentiles,* Acts xxvi. 22, 23. can be more evident to any intelligent person, than that the apostle ap-

literal predictions that the *Messiah*
 should suffer and dye, and rise again from
 the dead, and bring salvation to the
 gentiles; and that *these were the great*
things he witnessed thro' the help of God,
small and great? See also *Acts* x.
 xiii. 27, 47. xv. 15, 16. and xxviii.
 which are all the places cited in the
 as proofs of *Jesus* being the *Mes-*
iah, and which all refer to those grand
 facts I have insisted on. How there-
 fore our author will make out that posi-
 tive assertion, which he lays down, *p.*
80. I understand not, *viz.* *that*
the authors of the books of the New Tes-
tament always argue absolutely from the
literal quotations they make out of
the books of the Old Testament, and
that Moses and the prophets are every
where represented to be a just foundati-
on for Christianity. That he means the
 literal sense of the quotations, is e-
 vident from what he farther adds,
that the preachers of the gospel gave the
spiritual sense of the scriptures.
 23. whereas nothing is more evident, than
 that the apostles never argue absolutely,

either from the allegorical or literal sense of prophecies, *i. e.* never put the truth of *Christianity* upon this as its sole foundation ; but refer men to those undeniable facts which evince the truth of *Christianity* ; *viz.* the miracles, and doctrine and resurrection of *Christ* and the effusion of his spirit ; and then in order to remove the prejudices of the *Jews* against *Jesus Christ*, upon account of his suffering, shew how exact an accomplishment the things were of those ancient prophecies concerning the *Messiah*, which according to the letter, and most obvious sense, did presignify these great events. And thus far the argument is certainly conclusive. If *Jesus Christ*, by his doctrine and miracles, did prove himself a real prophet, or person sent from God ; and if he applied those predictions of the *Jewish* writings, relating to the *Messiah*, to himself ; and if there was an exact correspondence between those prophecies, and the circumstances of his life and death, and entire character ; it will follow that he was, not only a real prophet, but a particular prophet described by the prophecies.

phesies: and as the proper and convincing proofs of his mission from God be the excellency of his doctrines, the extraordinary nature of his works; the only arguments that could solidly give him to be that particular prophet the *Jews*, must be fetched from the agreement of those prophetick descriptions to him, and their accomplishment in

Thus far the *New Testament* writers argue absolutely from the law and prophets; *i. e.* they argue from the descriptions of the *Messiah* in the *Old Testament*, and their accomplishment in *Jesus*, who was the *Messiah*: because as this is the only proof that could be urged in the case, so it was a substantial real conclusive one; the argument being founded on *literal express prediction*. and as express and literal an accomplishment; and not upon any *secret* *al meaning and sense of prophecies*, and as our author so often and so falsely insinuates. And therefore his interpreting that passage of *St. Paul*, *1 Cor.* ii. chap. in support of his own by *p. 92, 93.* argues him very ignorant

norant of St. *Paul's* meaning, (which
 hope is the case) or wilfully to have mis-
 represented him. 'Tis allowed that he
 doth argue against the *Greeks* and philo-
 sophers. But what is the subject of his
 argument? What, that weak and incon-
 clusive proofs ought to be made use
 to support *Christianity*? or that the pro-
 phecies, cited by *Jesus* and his apostles
 have no other reference to him, or to the
Messiah, but in an *allegorical, mystical*
sense? There is not one single word
 to this purpose, in either of the
 chapters. St. *Paul's* meaning is evident-
 ly this; that he did not insist upon phi-
 losophical speculations, or study, as
 custom then was, to recommend his
 and doctrines by eloquence or oratory,
 but preached in a very plain manner
 that plain doctrine of salvation by a
 crucified Saviour, that so the success of
Christianity might appear to be from
 and not owing to the art and subtilty
 of men. And tho' this doctrine was
 a *stumbling block to the Jews*, and
 a *foolishness to the Greeks*, who were
 slaves to vice, or under the influence

strong prejudice and pride ; yet to those who were *perfect*, (*τελειοις* is the *thoroughly initiated*, persons who thoroughly understood the excellent nature and tendency of *Christianity*,) to such it was *wisdom* ; to them it appeared a dispensation worthy of an all-wise God. It was *wisdom in mystery* ; i. e. this wise and glorious method of bringing men to happiness, tho' intended of God from before the foundation of the world, was long kept a secret from them, and understood by those who *crucified the Lord of Glory* ; for had they known they would not have crucified him : whereas God was pleased, in his abundant goodness, to reveal it to the apostles by the Holy Spirit, without which it could never have been understood. *For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God* ; i. e. a man, by the meer use of his natural reason, without a divine and supernatural revelation, would never have thought of this method of salvation : yea, on the contrary, it would have appeared a very unlikely and improper method to save men, had not God, by his

his spirit, been pleased to assure us, that this was the way he had fixed on. This was a matter to be only *spiritually discerned*, i. e. which could never have been known without revelation, and the special illumination of the spirit *who searches the deep things of God*, i. e. understands his secret counsels, and is able to reveal them to us. *But he that is spiritual judgeth all things*; i. e. He who hath a revelation from the spirit, is a proper judge in these matters, *tho' he himself is judged of no man*, viz. none who are not under the influence of the same spirit of God. This is the plain meaning of St. Paul in this passage: who never had thought of opposing the man, who judgeth by the *common rules of wisdom or philosophy*, to him who *finds out secret, mystical meanings of things, by special revelation imparted to him of God*; but speaks of doctrines discovered by revelation, which could never have been known without it. So that the allegorical way of reasoning was so far from being set up by Paul, as the rest of the apostles, *as the true and only reasoning proper to bring all to favor*

the faith of Christ, p. 94. that they
 never laid any stress on allegories, nor ar-
 gued the truth of any one single doctrine,
 or fact from them ; nor endeavour *to*
bring the Gentiles out of the literal way of
believing, i. e. of believing Christianity
 on solid foundations : but recommend-
 ed the miracles, doctrines and resurrection
 of *Jesus*, as the proper evidence of his
 divine mission ; with this difference only
 the *Jews*, that they shewed from the
 truest predictions of their own pro-
 phets, that these things, which were great
 objections to them, against their believing
 in him, ought to be just as they were,
 became necessary by virtue of the pro-
 phesies which foretold them. And tho'
 the apostle doth tell us, *that not many*
of the men were called ; yet that he doth
 mean persons who reasoned justly and
 consistently, he himself tells us, when he
 calls them *wise men after the flesh, i. e.*
 persons under the power of vicious ha-
 bits, or under the prepossession of strong
 incurable prejudices ; who opposed
 the doctrines of *Christianity*, either because
 all unfavourable to their crimes, or contrary

to those mistaken principles they had in-
bibed; not because they used *maxims*
reasoning, p. 94. and disputing *who*
opposite to, i. e. in our author's sen-
more just, and proper, and pertinent to
the *Christians*, who needed not argument
from allegories, to support *Christians*
when they might argue the truth of
from facts, which all its adversaries hith-
to have never been able to disprove.

However, tho' nothing is more
dent, from what hath been already
than that the apostles laid their prin-
stress on this, that the sufferings and re-
rection of *Christ*, and the preaching
gospel to the *Gentiles*, were conform-
to the ancient prophecies relating to
Messiah, and therefore that our Lord's
ferings were no real objection against
truth of his pretensions, nor his resur-
on a thing incredible, nor the preac-
the gospel to the *Gentiles* a thing crim-
but even necessary to fulfil the saying
the prophets; yet 'tis certain that the
ted other passages of scripture, beside
as relate to those great events, and
plied them to *Jesus Christ*. And

question here is, whether some of these
 passages have a real original reference to
Messiah; and if not, how 'tis con-
 sistent with the apostles characters, as inspi-
 red persons, to make such a false applica-
 tion of them to him? I answer, that of
 the several quotations mentioned by our
 author, some of them have a certain refe-
 rence to the *Messiah*, and were literally
 accomplished in *Christ*; and no other but
 him. This I have already shewn of *Isa-*
iah vii. 14. applied by *Matthew* i. 23.
 The same is true of *Micah* v. 2. applied
 by *Matthew*, as our author, thro' mis-
 take, asserts, but by *the chief priests and*
scribes of the people, to the *Messiah*,
Mat. ii. 4. of *Isaiah* xl. 3. applied
Mat. iii. 3. with others that might be
 mentioned. The application of such texts
 to these, which have a manifest reference
 to the *Messiah*, to *Jesus Christ*, is with
 the greatest reason and justice; and there-
 fore can be no exception against the cha-
 racter of the apostles, as persons inspired
 by the *Holy Ghost*.

As for other places, whose reference
 to the *Messiah* is not so plain; I think
 'tis

'tis sufficient to obviate every objection
 that can be brought against the apostles
 for applying them to *Jesus*, to consider
 that it doth not appear they always cit
 such places, as real predictions of events
 to happen in the *Messiah's* time; nor ap
 ply them to *Jesus*, as the proofs of his
 being the *Messiah*; but make use of the
Old Testament scriptures, in their wr
 tings and controversies; with such view
 and such purposes, as were most suitab
 to the circumstances of the persons
 whom they wrote. The first who
 had the gospel preached to them were
Jews; and the several churches the
Apostles at first gathered were eith
 mostly of that nation, or else
 mixture of *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The
Apostles also of our blessed Saviour
 were all of them *Jews*, who boast
 of their sacred writings, as the great
 privilege and glory of their nation, and
 who had been bred up with the high
 esteem and veneration for them. And
 therefore 'tis no wonder that *Je*
 writing to *Jews* should make frequ
 use of those scriptures, allowed, on e

to be of divine original, and intro-
 them on every occasion, to adorn,
 ate, and confirm their arguments.
 tho' we, at this distance of time,
 not be able to fix any rules, by which
 distinguish when they quoted them for
 or the other purpose ; yet undoubt-
 those to whom they wrote, who
 the method of writing at that time,
 stood the reason and propriety of
 orations they made ; and there is no
 to think, that the apostles would
 have gone to have exposed themselves,
 because they espoused, by an unna-
 and unusual application, or explica-
 any passages out of the *Old Testa-*
 The prejudices of the *Jews* against
 his religion, were al-
 strong enough, and needed not to
 be strengthened by a method of quoting
 that would have been generally
 a perverting and abusing it.



C H A P. XI.

The particular places excepted against by the Authors of the Grounds, &c. accounted for.



UT possibly it may be so very difficult after to account for if not all those citations which are excepted against and to give some plausible reasons why the writers of the *Testament* made such use of them. here 'tis evident that they quote passages of the *Old Testament*, by way of illustration and simile, and to present their own sense and meaning in instances, familiar to, and well

good by those to whom they wrote.
 has St. *Paul* to the *Galatians*, iv. 21.
 which our author also mentions
 with an air of contempt and scorn, p.
 (tho' he falsely represents it, as design-
 to be a proof to the *Jews* of *Christi-*
ty from the *Old Testament*) illustrates
 the different states of men under the *Mo-*
sick and *Christian* dispensations, by the
 different states of the children born to
Abraham by the bondwoman, and by
Abraham his wife. *Tell me ye that desire*
to be under the law. i. e. You who
 desire the observance of *Jewish* rites
 and ceremonies on *Christians*, as necessa-
 ry to salvation; *do ye not hear the law?*
 Will I put you in mind of a passage in
 the *law*, which fitly represents your case?
Abraham had two sons, the one by a
maid, the other by a free-woman.
He who was of the bond-woman was
born after the flesh; but he of the free-
woman was by promise. And that it
 may appear what use he intended to
 make of this passage, he adds, *Which*
things are an allegory. *ΑΤΙΝΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΑΛΛΗ-
 ΓΟΡΙΑ. Which things may be allego-

rized, or made use of, as a figurative representation of the different states of *Jews and Christians. For these are the two covenants*. Αἱ δὲ δύο διαθήκαι. These two women denote, in the allegory, the two covenants : or I may fitly compare the two different dispensations, under *Moses and Christ*, to the different states and circumstances of these two women. Μία ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ. *The one covenant, which was delivered from the mount Sinai, delivereth to bondage.* Ἡ τις ἐστὶν Ἀγαρ. *Which is Agar, or which covenant is Agar* the bond-woman in the allegory, who being a bond-woman herself, could, *quia parturit sequitur ventrem*, bring forth none but children subject to bondage. And the covenant from *Sinai* is more properly noted by her. Τὸ γὰρ Ἀγαρ Σινᾶ ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ. *Because Agar is of the name of a mountain also, even part of the tract of hills in Arabia, called by the general name of Sinai, from whence the very covenant was delivered.* Σὺ γὰρ τῇ ἰὺν Ἱερουσαλὴμ. *And answereth, Jerusalem* the covenant, not the woman (nor *Agar the mountain*) to the present

em. Διλεύει δὲ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.
 which city is *in bondage with its chil-*
ren or inhabitants Ἡ δὲ ἄνω, Ἱερουσαλήμ
 ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐστίν. *But the other covenant **
above, is the free Jerusalem; not
our translation, the Jerusalem, which
above, is free. For the apostle plainly
 notes the covenant from *Sinai*, to that
above: and as the covenant from *Si-*
 dorch συστοιχεῖν τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλὴμ *ansf-*
to the present Jerusalem; so the other
 ἡ δὲ ἄνω must *answer to,*
be the free Jerusalem: and as the ἡ νῦν
 Ἱερουσαλὴμ the present *Jerusalem, is in bon-*
with her children; so the free Je-
usalem is the mother of all Christians, as
 And the apostle tells us, v. 26. who are *the*
children of the promise, as Sarah's child
 Σαρά and *not of the flesh, as Agar's was;*
 Agar of consequence in a state, not of ser-
 vitude, but perfect freedom; as the apostle
 self tells us, v. 31. *So then, brethren,*
we are not children of
bond-woman, but of the free.

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the apostle elsewhere uses ἄνω in this sense without
 opposition. See *Phil. iii. 14.* where the τὸ βραβεῖον
 ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄνω is *the prize of our call from above, or of our*
calling. See *Coloss. iii. 12.*

'Tis plain from hence, to every one who considers this passage, that there are two things the apostles had in view in it. The one to represent the different nature of the two covenants, which God made; first with the *Jews* by *Moses*, and afterwards with *Christians* by *Jesus Christ*. The one, which was delivered from mount *Sinai*, denoted by *Agar* a bond-woman, was a covenant that gadded to bondage, i. e. brought the Jews under an heavy yolk of burthened rites and ceremonies; under which yoke and burthen *Jerusalem*, with its inhabitants, the apostle tells them, continued to that day. The nature of the other covenant is as justly represented by the condition of *Sarah*, who was herself a free-woman, and who therefore was looked upon as the mother of all *Christians*; who by the gospel are brought into a state of the most perfect liberty. The other thing that the apostle intended to represent by this allegory, was the different condition of *Jews* and *Christians*, according as they were under these different dispensations;

both under the different circumstances
 the two children, born of *Sarah* and
Isaac was born, not properly af-
 ter the flesh (*Abraham* and *Sarah* being
 of past age) but after the promise; in
 consequence of a special promise made of God
 to his parents; and became *Abraham's*
 by God's appointment, preferable to
 his elder brother. And thus also
 Christians, tho' not the children of *Abra-*
 ham according to the flesh, yet as *Isaac*
 are children of the promise. For it
 is written, rejoice thou barren that bear-
 not, break forth and cry out thou that
 sleepest not; for the desolate hath ma-
 ny more children than she which hath an
 husband; and being thus *Abraham's*
 heirs they are become his heirs accord-
 ing to the promise. The other son *Isma-*
 el was born after the flesh; i. e. when
Abraham and *Agar* were, in the u-
 surpation of nature, capable of having
 children; but notwithstanding this, he
 cast out with his mother the bond-wo-
 man and not suffered to be heir with *Sa-*
rah's son, because he persecuted him that
 was born after the spirit, i. e. *Isaac*, ei-

ther born to inherit his father's promises, or as I rather think, whose was owing to the immediate influence of the spirit. And thus the *Jews*, tho' *Abraham's Children* according to the yet, for persecuting the Lord *Jesus* the true promised seed of *Abraham* born after the spirit, were to be re from being God's peculiar people and inheritance, even as *Ismael* was from being heir to the house of *Abraham's* Father.

This is the plain sense and view of the whole passage. And what is there very ridiculous in this way of talking? What unbecoming the character of a man, or an inspired apostle? Every man hath the liberty of illustrating his sense by what representation and simile he pleases. And in the case before us, nothing could be more proper than that which the apostle uses; considering he was speaking either to bigotted *Jews* or those, who were so far leavened with *Jewish* principles, as to be for bringing *Christians* under bondage to *Jewish* ceremonies. How could the apo

represent two covenants, each having
 their respective subjects under it, than by
 the simile of a mother and her children?
 How could he better illustrate this to
 Jews, than by putting them in mind of
Isaac and *Agar*, the two wives of *Abra-*
ham their father? How could he better
 prove that persons, not *Abraham's* chil-
 dren according to the flesh, yet might be-
 come his children, and inherit by virtue
 of a promise; and that *Abraham's* chil-
 dren, according to the flesh, might be re-
 moved from the inheritance and blessing,
 by proving it was so originally, with
 respect to *Abraham's* own children, by *Sa-*
rah and *Agar* his wives? So that as this
 allegory partly illustrates, and partly proves,
 that it was designed to illustrate or
 prove; it is, with a great deal of ele-
 gance made use of in this place by
 the apostle: who never designed it as
 an argument to prove *Christianity*, but
 as an illustration of the different
 characters of *Christianity* and *Judaism*;
 bringing to shew them from their own
 Jewish figures, that not all who are born
 of *Abraham* according to the flesh,
 but

but those only who are born according to the spirit, are *Abraham's* proper children and heirs of the promises.

I hope our author did not wilfully misrepresent this plain passage : and choose, even against appearance, to persuade my self to think, (I wish, for his sake, I may guess right) that 'twas the effect of hasty prejudice ; and beg him for the future to be sure of the absurdity in *St. Paul's* writings, before he gives himself the liberty of ridiculing them.

Sometimes the writers of the *New Testament* quote the scriptures of the *Old Testament* shew a correspondence of events between the *Old Testament* and the *New*, or present such particular events as properly described by such particular expressions, because they nearly resemble the events of which these expressions were originally descriptive. Thus, *out of Ægypt he called my son*, is not appealed to as a proof, that *Christ* was to go into *Ægypt* and then to return out of it ; but only as an observation of the agreement of circumstances between the infant state of the

commonwealth, and that of the child
 the son of God, the king of *Israel* ;
 being carried into *Egypt* by a spe-
 cial providence, for their preservation, and
 a special providence called out of it ;
 because the bringing of God's only
 out of *Egypt*, was an event as tru-
 worthy of notice, as the bringing the
 children of *Israel* from thence into the
 of promise : and his coming from
 was a *fulfilling of that which was*
promised by the Lord, or, it was agreeable
 to the true sense of those words, and in
 a peculiar manner made them good.
 This is a thing familiar with the
Testament writers ; to represent
 things happening in their own time, by
 images of scripture denoting former e-
 vents like them. Thus the same evange-
 list in another place, *Mat. ii. 18.* tells
 us *that which was spoken*
by the prophet, xxxi. 15. or, his
 words, upon an occasion of great distress,
 may be more especially applied to the
 distress of the weeping bereaved
 parents, upon the slaughter of their chil-
 dren by cruel *Herod*. *In Ramah was*
there

there a voice heard, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not. Here 'tis worthy of our observation, this very passage of *Jeremiah* is plainly allusion to *Rachel's* grief because she had no children. *Give me children or I die* said *Rachel* to her husband. *Gen. xxx* *Rachel's* grief was exceeding bitter because she had no children; and the more her grief, prophetically described by *Jeremiah* was to be as bitter, because bereaft of children they had. And therefore it was proper in *Jeremiah* to point out the grief he prophesied of, by *Rachel*, it is as proper in *Matthew* to apply the same instance to describe an occasion of great distress in his own time. In the same sense, were fulfilled those words of *Isaiah* vi. 9. which *St. Paul* applies to the Jews who believed not; *Acts xxviii.* 26. *Go unto this people, and say, hear ye shall hear, and sha'll not understand; seeing ye sha'll see, and not perceive.* And in another place, and at a different time, tho' for the same reason, *Rom. ix.* 12.

with another form of quotation. *According as it is written, God hath given eyes that they should not see.* And further to be observed, that these very words are the same, which our Saviour says to the *Jews*, upon another occasion *Mat. xiii. 14.* and from their being thus quoted by *Christ* and *St. Paul* at different times, tho' applied to persons in different circumstances, we may reasonably infer to our present purpose, that it is very usual to apply the passages of the *Old Testament*, to describe any particular events, correspondent to those, which were originally denoted by such passages. This passage of *Isaiah* was certainly a description of the bad temper of *Israel* in his time : but yet because the words were to whom our Saviour preached, and afterwards to whom *St. Paul* preached, were of the like perverse and obstinate disposition, this passage was justified to them both ; and none, but by the great intelligence of our author, have been in danger of looking at such quotations as designed to be mystical and mystical proofs. I add, that

that St. *Paul's* method of quoting the passage leads us to the true meaning of it in a different form our Saviour makes use of. *Christ* introduces it with, *In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias ; i. e.* where the words of that prophecy describe them, they do as truly describe now as they may be as justly applied to the Jews of this time, as they were to the Jews then. For to this purpose they are evidently quoted by St. *Paul*, who thus introduces them, *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers.* In which words he owns the prophecy was originally meant of the Jews, tho' at the same time, because of the great agreement of circumstances, he applies them to their obstinate and unbelieving children. And lastly, the Evangelist in a different manner, in which *Mark* brings our Saviour as quoting this passage, and sufficiently explains the meaning of the form of quotation our Saviour used, according to *Matthew*. In *Mark* iv. 11, 12, our Lord, in a continued discourse, brings in the words of this prophecy, without any form of quotation at all : from whence it appears

appears, that he cited them only to express his own sense of the *Jews* perverse temper, that the impression made on them might be greater, by putting them in mind, that it was the temper of their fathers as described by the prophet ; a method often used by the preceding prophets. — See *Isa.* lxxv. 7. *Jerem.* xvi. 10. *Ezek.* xx. 8, &c. and by our Saviour himself elsewhere. *Mat.* xxiii. 31. and *Stephen, Acts* vii. 51, 52. And if it appears to be the reason of our Saviour's quoting this passage according to Mark ; 'tis reasonable to think, that the manner of quotation in *Matthew* means no more, since the passage quoted and the occasion were both the same.

Sometimes they quote the *Old Testament* scriptures by way of accommodation, as emphatically expressive of their own sense and meaning. Of this there are many instances to be produced. See *Rom.* vi. 10. &c. and in other places. And when they are cited for this purpose, sometimes the author from whence they are taken is not mentioned. See *Rom.* vi. and xi. 34. But generally they are introduced

introduced with an, *as it written*, or *the*
saith Esaias, or *the scripture*. i. e. to
 which purpose I may apply this or the o
 ther passage of the scripture ; to shew th
 the words are cited, not as real and pr
 per proofs, but as justly describing th
 writers sense, or fitly applicable to th
 argument he is treating of. And th
 method of citing scripture is very com
 mon with St. *Paul* ; which I am inc
 ned to think he rather did, that he mig
 shew, that notwithstanding the scriptur
 were grown so much into contempt amo
 many of the *Jews*, they having learnt
 esteem the tradition of the elders bef
 them, yet they were worthy the seri
 reading and consideration of all Christia
 as being *profitable for doctrine, for*
proof, for correction, and instruction
righteousness.

Sometimes they apply the gen
 sense of the prophecies of the *Old Testam*
ent, to particular events under
New : or shew that these events
 agreeable to the plain sense and m
 ing of those prophecies ; and that th
 fore they are so far a proper ac
 plishm

ment of them. Thus it was plainly told, that the *Messiah* should be *with-
form and comlyness*, and that he should
despised and rejected of men; that men
should hide their faces from him; that
he should be despised and not esteemed.

therefore all the reproachful names were given him, and every circumstance that had a tendency to make him and contemptible in the opinion of men, was a literal and proper accomplishment of such prophecies. And therefore with justice it might be said on every such occasion, *this or that happened, the scriptures might be fulfilled*; not predicting that particular Event, but as telling what that event verified, *viz.* his appearance should be mean, and person contemptible. Thus *Jesus and dwelt in a city called Nazareth* that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets; not that he should be at Nazareth, as our author, p. 100 hastily asserts, but *that he should be called a Nazarene*; i. e. counted a contemptible insignificant fellow. Galilee was looked on to be the most contemptible place in all Judea, and Nazareth

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the most despicable town in *Galilee*, is therefore *to be called a Nazarene*, is the same thing as to be accounted a mean and insignificant person, and one unlikely to be a prophet. And that is the true sense of *Nazarene*, appears from several instances. Thus when he said that *Jesus* was the *Christ*, he objected, *Shall Christ come out of Galilee?* *John* vii. 14. and thus the *Pharisees* answered *Nicodemus*, *Search the scriptures, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.* *John* vii. 52. And *Nathanael* said to *Philip*, declaring *Jesus* to be the *Messiah*, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* *John* i. 46. And *Paul* tells *Agrippa*, *I verily thought myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name, of the contemptible name, of Jesus of Nazareth.* *Acts* xxvi. 9. And thus the *Christians* themselves were called by the reproachful name of *Nazarenes*. Thus 'twas one of *St. Paul's* accusations, that he was a *pestilent fellow*, ----- and a *ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes.* *Acts* xxi. 28. *Galilean* also was a name of like reproach and scorn. Thus some of them

Peter, said *thou art a Galilean, and speech agreeth thereto* ; intimating there was something very mean in speech that betrayed his country. *Mark* 17. And the reason why the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* wondered to hear the *Idiots* speaking all languages, was, *because they were Galileans. Acts ii. 7.* This was a name by which the primitive Christians were called by their enemies in derision : and *Julian* is said thus to have reproached our Saviour, in that known expression, *Vicisti Galilæe* ; which, if never spoken by *Julian*, yet clearly proves that *Galilean* was a name of reproach and contempt. Now this surely the scriptures did plainly foretel, that *Christ* should be accounted a contemptible person. So that we have no need of *Netzer* or *Tsemah*, nor any such forced and far-fetched reconciliations to justify *St. Matthew* in this ; because the scriptures did plainly foretel what this name *Nazarene*, as fixed upon *Christ*, did certainly accomplish. And this different method of citing this place, which what is else where made use of, is a circumstance to be here regarded. *St. Mat.* doth not cite this as a prediction of a-

ny particular prophet ; but introduces with, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken*, δια τῶν προφητῶν *by the prophet* to shew that his being called a Nazarene did accomplish that, which the prophet foretold should happen to the *Messiah*, *that he should be despised and rejected of*

And in order to make this yet clearer if there be any need, let it be considered that prophecies of a general nature, only describing a general character, and such as all the prophecies that predict the low and humble condition of the *Messiah* can only be fulfilled by particular events or a train and series of such particular events as together make up such a character, whereas prophecies, describing only a particular circumstance only, can be fulfilled in no other way, but by such a circumstance happening to the person of whom it is predicted. Thus that prophecy of *Isaiah*, *cab*, v. 2. *But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come forth unto me, that shall be ruler in Israel, could be no other way accomplished, but by that person* Thus

forth from, or being born in *Beth-*
m, of whom the prophecy is intend-
 But now if it be prophecied of the
 person, that he should be as one,
that had no form or comlyness in him,
he should be despised and rejected
men, a man of sorrows, and acquaint-
with grief, and that men should hide
their faces from him, that he should be
despised and rightly esteem'd; how is this
 prophecy to be accomplished? What, by
 one particular occurrence? No, but
 such a series of events as was necessa-
 ry to make up this character, or to shew
 that he was a person both afflicted and
 despised. And therefore every particu-
 lar circumstance of his disgrace and suf-
 fering, tho' not particularly foretold,
 in accomplishment of the true sense
 and meaning of these general prophecies:
 as upon every such occasion *these*
prophecies were fulfilled, it was justly said,
this or that was done that
the scriptures might be fulfilled; and
 especially when the more remarka-
 ble circumstances happened, which tended
 to render him contemptible and afflict-
 ed. Thus when the *Pharisees* charged

him with *casting out devils by Beelzebub*, Mat. 12. 24. when *many of his country men and kindsfolk believed not in him*, Mat. xiii. 57. when he was *set at nought and mocked of Herod and his men of war*, Luke xxiii. 11. when *Barabbas the thief and murtherer was preferred before him*, Luke xxiii. 18. as these things accomplished the prophecies concerning him; I think, that with the highest reason might be said upon every one of the occasions, *It came to pass that the scriptures might be fulfilled.* And in this we find the very same form of quotation else where made use of by *Christ himself*, and the *Evangelist Matthew*. Upon our Lord's being betrayed by *Judas*, and apprehended by the officers, of the chief priests, and *Christ's* saying the ear of the high priests for which *Peter* had cut off, and then to him, *Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than ten legions of Angels*; he adds, *But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?* I do not find that any one of these things were particularly foretold

I apprehend that these several circumstances of disgrace and contempt did fulfil all those prophecies, that spake of the mean and afflicted state of the *Messiah*; Mat. xxvi. 54. And thus the *Evangelist* in the verses after, adding another circumstance or two of our Lord's apprehension, viz. his words to the multitude, *ye come out as against a thief with swords and with staves to take me! I daily with you teaching in the temple, ye laid not hold on me*; concludes, *all this was done that the scriptures the prophets might be fulfilled*, ver. 55. not surely because they predicted all the particular events, but only the general character of a *despised afflicted* person, which these particular circumstances made evident. And thus I think I have cleared the sense of this passage, and shewn that the prophets did predict, what the name *Immanuel*, as given to our Saviour, did import; and that therefore St. *Matthew* says upon this occasion, *the scriptures were fulfilled*.

Under this head it may be also proposed to vindicate the application of another prophecy made by *Christ*; viz.

that *John's* coming into the world fulfilled that prophecy, which declared that *Elia* should come before the day of the Lord. Our author p. 76. affirms that this prophecy is not literally, but *mystically* fulfilled. I on the contrary affirm, that in the proper sense of it, it is truly and mystically fulfilled. And in order to show this, 'tis necessary to make but this observation: *viz.* that sometimes the *Testament* writings call one person by the name of the other, who lived before him; if in any remarkable circumstances he was found to resemble him. There are many instances of this. The *Messiah* himself, according to the sense of the best Jewish interpreters, and the plain meaning of several places, is called by the name of *David*. Thus *Ezekiel*, speaking of the Messianic time, that God would bring to pass, introduces him as thus speaking, *I will set up one nation in the land upon the mountain of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all. And David my servant shall be king over them; and my servant David shall be prince for ever.* Ezek. xxxvii. 24, 25. Some prince shall come and build the city.

David

David's house, and restore the glory of
 the throne ; be called to the government
 in as extraordinary a manner, and be as
 triumphant and victorious, as *David* was.
 See also *Ezek.* xxxiv. 23. And there-
 fore if there ever hath appeared such a
 person as this, the prophecy hath been cer-
 tainly accomplished, tho' *David* himself
 never ascended the throne, in person,
 since his death. And as the *Messiah* him-
 self was thus spoken of, under *David's*
 name ; is it any thing strange that his fore-
 runner should be described by the name
 of prophet, *with whose spirit and pow-
 er he was to come* ? The *Jews* expecting
Messiah to appear in person proves nothing,
 'tis plain some of them did not. The
 question is, whether that prophecy, *Mal.*
 iii. 1. may not, according to the genius
 and frequent use of the *Jewish* language,
 mean one that was to be very like to
Messiah. This I have shewn in one
 instance. Another is in *1 Chron.* vi.
 13. where the high priest and his children,
 at *David's* time, are mentioned by the
 name of *Aaron and his sons*, because
 they succeeded them in their priestly
 office

office and dignity. See also 1 Kings xii. 16. Jer. xxx. 9. Hos. iii. 5. and other places might be mentioned. And if this be *Malachy's* meaning, that one in many respects resembling *Elijah* should be the *Messiah's* forerunner; the consequence then is, that this prophecy was properly accomplished in *John Baptist*.

Sometimes they cite passages of the *Old Testament*, as allowed, and certain principles, in order to argue from them the truth of *Christian* doctrines, as their natural and necessary consequences. Of this we shall find many instances in St. Paul's epistles. Thus in his epistle to the *Romans*, chap. i. 17. he tells us, *That the gospel the righteousness of God, the divine method of accepting and pardoning men, is revealed to be* *ἐν τῷ εἰς πίστιν*, *by faith*, in order to bring *to the faith*, *εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως* *for the obedience of faith*, i. e. to bring men to believe the gospel; as it is written, agreeable to that avowed principle of the *Old Testament*, *the just shall live, ἐν τῇ* *by faith*. And the argument of the

very strong and conclusive, that since
 God had declared, in the *Old Testament*,
 his prophets, *that the just should live*
faith, the *Jews* ought the more rea-
 dy to believe the gospel ; because there-
 the same principle of mens justificati-
 on $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ by faith, is laid down $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\omega\iota$
 order to bring men to the obedience
 it. And thus in *Chap.* xi, xii. xiii.
 find him abounding in his quotations
 of scriptures, and that with the great-
 elegance and propriety. For as
 these, and other places, he argues a-
 gainst *Jewish* topicks, or matters peculiar
 to the *Jews* ; it was necessary to consider
 the sense of the *Jewish* scriptures, in or-
 der to shew, that *Christianity* was so far
 from contradicting them, that all its main
 principles were agreeable to them, and
 supported by the most express testimony
 in them.



C H A P. XII.

Of ARGUMENTS *ad*
Hominem.

UT if these particulars should not be thought sufficient to account for the citations out of *Old Testament* in *New*; there is yet another method of vindicating the apostles, still remaining *viz.* that they argued *ad hominem*, from the allowed interpretation of scripture amongst the *Jews*, in order to convince them, upon their own principles, that *Jesus* was the true *Messiah*. The author hath spent a whole chapter, II, to prove the contrary; but failed in the attempt. If indeed
asser

ertions, and malicious insinuations and
 comparisons would have done, he hath
 been wanting in this part of the ar-
 gument : but I may venture to affirm,
 that he hath not advanced one probable
 reason in support of his assertion. I have
 already proved, that the *Jews*, long be-
 fore the time of *Christ*, were in expecta-
 tion of the *Messiah* ; i. e. of a certain
 prince and deliverer, whose coming as they
 apprehended, was foretold by the writings
 of their prophets. Of consequence, no
 arguments could be sufficient to convince
 them of *Jesus's* being the *Messiah*, or that
 particular prince they expected, unless
 they saw the prophecies, which they ap-
 prehended had a relation to him, verified
 in the person who assumed that character :
 therefore 'twas as necessary that the
 apostles should shew, that those passages,
 which had a real reference to the *Messi-*
 ah, were accomplished in *Jesus Christ*,
 that it was that they should prove him to
 be the *Messiah*. And as to other passa-
 ges where the reference to the *Messiah*
 is not so natural and clear, yet, if it
 had been the constant method of the
Jews

Jews to apply them to the future time of the *Messiah*; nothing could be more proper in the apostles, when reasoning with the *Jews*, than to apply them to *Jesus Christ*, as far as they did agree to person and character.

But is this agreeable to the character of inspired persons, to make use of arguments not conclusive, or to argue with others from what they know to be a false sense of scripture? I answer, that so many and strong were the prejudices that *Jews* laboured under, as made their conversion to *Christianity* exceeding difficult and therefore rendered it the more necessary that they should be dealt with in a very tender manner. Particulars were to be told them as they were able to bear, and their prejudices were gradually removed by a prudent forbearance. The apostles of our blessed Lord could not but remember his conduct towards themselves, and acknowledge both the wisdom and goodness of it; and had therefore reason to believe that the same method of acting towards others might have a good influence

m. They did not indeed conceal the
in and essential doctrines of *Christi-*
ty, how much soever those to whom
y preached might be offended with
m. But as for other matters of lesser
portance, the interpretation of a single
age of scripture for instance; supposing
m mistaken, was it necessary they should
immediately contradicted? Or rather,
s it not prudent to leave it to time and
ter knowledge to correct it? Or ought
apostles to have neglected to shew
m, how such and such a passage was
omplished in *Jesus Christ*, if they fairly
ld do it, and those, to whom they
ached, expected it?

If these indeed were the only topicks
y argued from, I should suspect their
piration, and their testimony would
erve but little credit. But since there
but few instances of this kind, and
apostles lay but little stress upon
h citations; and at the same time they
ke use of them, lay down other solid
substantial proofs of the truth of
ristianity, such as the certainty of
ist's miracles and resurrection, the
excellency

excellency of his doctrines, and the certain accomplishments of real prophecy as this was a rational method of conveying them to the *Christian* faith, so other was but a prudent means of preventing the ill effects of their prejudices: all that will follow from this way of arguing in the apostles, is, not that they deavoured to build *Christianity* on a foundation, but that as they established the truth of it by undeniable proofs, they took all the best care they could secure to them their proper influence and force. Indeed such a method of arguing as this is not to be looked upon as proper proof; nor is it ever designed such by those who make a just use of it. It is rather an appeal to a person's presentiments, and taking the advantage of his own concessions. This 'tis that would be unworthy a wise or a good man, if there were no arguments of intrinsic worth made use of: but where the thing to be proved is supported by solid reasons, I see nothing to forbid appealing to a persons avowed sentiments, where a fair advantage can

de of it ; especially, as by thus complying
 a while with an innocent prejudice,
 take the most effectual way hereafter
 remove it. For he who uses this me-
 d of arguing with another, doth not
 by avow the truth of the principles he
 es from ; and therefore cannot be said
 onfirm him in his prejudice or mistake ;
 at the same time it must be allowed,
 oth not endeavour to undeceive him.
 is it necessary that, when we argue
 any person to convince him of any
 ular truth, we must immediately al-
 endeavour to undeceive him of every
 ke ? Is it not the more rational and
 ay, first to establish him in the belief
 e things that are of greater impor-
 and when by the force of evidence
 gained thus far, lesser mistakes will
 ore easily removed, and truth of
 sort will have the more free
 to his understanding and belief.
 ing then that passage of *Hosea*,
of Egypt have I called my son,
 ot any original reference to the
 , but was only interpreted so
 e by the *Jews* at that time ;

B b

how

how were they to be treated under a persuasion ? Had the apostles of *Jesus Christ* immediately denied the reference of this prophecy to the *Messiah*, they possibly would have answered, the person was, because there was nothing in the character to answer to it ; and so would have continued unbelievers, under pretence that scripture prophecies were not sufficiently accomplished in him. Was is it not therefore expedient, if there was any remarkable event in the Saviour's life, that did properly correspond with the sense of that passage, it should be pointed out to the *Jews* ? Or was there any thing of untruth in saying, that this was a prophecy of the *Messiah*, the *Scripture* is fulfilled ; or that the event is the accomplishment of many prophecies ?

Indeed the very application of the passages to *Jesus Christ* by his apostles is a proof enough that the *Jews*, in the apostles time, understood them of the *Messiah*, as our author allows, *p.* 81. where he says, *That the Pharisees, who made up the body of the Jews, as well as the*

ed the allegorical method in the time of
 Jesus and the apostles ; i. e. did interpret
 many passages of the *Old Testament* con-
 cerning the *Messiah*, and the times of his
 coming. Besides, had this been the pure
 invention of the apostles ; such a novel
 method of interpreting scripture would
 have been so far from being of service to
 their cause, that it must have exposed them
 to universal contempt ; and prejudiced
 more against a religion, that put such a
 forced interpretation on the sacred wri-
 tings, than all their pretended miracles
 could have prevailed with to embrace it.
 And it is reasonable to think, that the an-
 cient *Jews* would have attacked *Christiani-*
 ty with as great insolence, as our author,
 §. 3. tells us the modern ones do, if in
 many instances the apostles had either
 given a new interpretation of scripture,
 contrary to the received sense of scrip-
 ture at that time : and if this was then the
 usual method ; I think no reason can be
 alleged, why the apostles might not
 sometimes comply with it.
 What renders it probable that they did,
 is that St. *Matthew's* gospel, which con-

tains the most exceptionable passages, written originally in *Hebrew*, for the use of the *Jews*: and 'tis therefore reasonable to think, that as he understood the *Jews* sense of their own prophecies, being himself a *Jew*, so he would not neglect to shew how the principal events of *Jesus*'s life corresponded with them. And tho' this way of arguing would have been very improper with any persons but *Jews*, whose were the prophecies; yet to them it was necessary, because there was no other way of convincing them, but this, that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*.

But what is more considerable is, that the apostles never once make use of this method of arguing, but with *Jews* and *profelytes*, or persons leavened with *Jewish* principles; nor to prove any thing but that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*. Our author indeed, with his usual modesty, positively asserts the contrary: and tells us that particular apostles reasoned allegorically; i. e. from the false sense of scripture, in their sermons, with greater success on Gentiles than on *Jews*; as Paul did.

re Felix, when he said he took his here-
 or Christianity, from the law and the
 prophets, as well as before Agrippa: to
 which purpose he also cites other places,
 z. *Acts* xiii. 15 ----- 48. x. 37 -----
 p. 80. Now every one of these in-
 stances are so far from proving his point,
 that they prove the direct contrary to what
 produces them for.
 to the first in-stance, *St. Paul's* defence
 before *Felix*; our author did not seem to
 have over much regard to truth, when he
 tells us, that *Paul* calls *Christianity* his here-
 sy, whereas he only says, that after the man-
 ner which the *Jews* called heresy, so served
 the God of his fathers; nor when he
 says that he took his *Christianity* from the
 law and the prophets; of which there is
 at the least intimation, and the contrary
 which is true, he having received the
 Gospel by immediate revelation from *Christ*.
 Indeed the whole of his defence before
 Agrippa, is such, as makes it very evident,
 that his great design was to remove the
 prejudices the *Jews* his country men had
 conceived against him. In order to this he
 assures them, that he believed all things
 which were written in the law and the

prophets ; that he taught nothing contrary to them ; and that he was only called in question touching the resurrection of the dead. Such a declaration as this would have been very impertinent before a *gentile* auditory. When the *Jews* were his accusers, and his charge was, that he was the *ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, and a profaner of the temple* the publick avowing his belief of *things written in the law and the prophets, and his entertaining the same hope with them of a resurrection from the dead,* was the most proper vindication of himself from his *Jewish* accusations that could possibly be urged. But when he addresses himself more immediately to *Felix*, who knew nothing of the *Jewish* scriptures, he reasons of righteousness, temperance and judgment to common principles of natural religion : And 'twas this that awed the *Roman* governor and made him tremble, *Acts* xv. 15 ----- 25.

Nor is our author more happy in other instances he hath quoted. *Paul's* reasoning from the scriptures, *Acts* xiv. &c. was evidently designed

conviction of the *Jews* and religious
 proselytes. For the text expressly tells us,
 on a *sabbath day*, and in a *Jewish*
synagogue, and at the desire of the rulers
 of the *synagogue*, he reasoned with the
 Jewish congregation; urging this grand
 argument to convince them of the truth
 of *Christ's* being the *Messiah*, that both
 his death and resurrection from the dead
 were agreeable to the scripture. At v.
 'tis expressly declared that the congre-
 gation, in a great measure, consisted of
 Jews and proselytes; i. e. proselytes of
 the gate, who, tho' they worshipped and
 acknowledged the one true God, yet submitted
 to the ceremonial part of the *Jewish*
 religion. And 'tis therefore probable that,
 the *Gentiles* mentioned v. 42. is
 not idolatrous *Gentiles*, but these
 proselytes of the gate, to whom the *Jews*
 were as unwilling the gospel should be
 preached, as to the idolatrous *Gentiles*
 themselves. And therefore when *Paul*
 and *Barnabas* said, *It was necessary that*
the word of God should first have been
preached to you; but seeing ye, i. e. the
proselytes, put it from you, and judge your
selves

selves unworthy of everlasting life, turn to the Gentiles; I doubt not they mean these proselytes of the gate who, being looked on by the Jews as *aliens from the common-wealth of Israel*, might well rejoyce to have the word of *life* preached unto them. Or suppose that by *Gentiles* is meant idolatrous *Gentiles*; yet it is certain that *Paul* reasons from the scripture for the conviction of his *Jewish* hearers, v. 46. and that the *Gentiles* rejoiced to hear the doctrine of salvation preached to them, v. 47, 48.

In *Acts* xxvi. *Paul* reasons much in the same manner, when apologizing for himself before king *Agrippa*, who was himself of the *Jewish* religion. He declares his miraculous conversion: and endeavours to prove from the scripture, v. 23, &c. that *Christ* should rise from the dead, and should bring light to the people, and to the *Gentiles*. *Festus* the Roman governour, who knew nothing of the *Jewish* scripture, when he heard *St. Paul* talking of light and brightnesses, and voices from heaven, no doubt

preaching to the *Gentiles*, and the resurrection from the dead, concludes him visionary and enthusiast, and rashly pronounces him a madman. But the apostle clears himself of the charge by an immediate appeal to king *Agrippa*. *I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely. King Agrippa believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.* This examination of the apostle was at *Agrippa's* desire; and there is no other method so proper to defend himself, or *Christianity*, before this Jew-prince, as by shewing that the things [Paul] taught were agreeable to those scriptures, which they both equally professed to believe.

And as for *Cornelius* who is the instance our author takes notice of, this is as little to the purpose as the first. For *Cornelius* was a proselyte of the gate, a just man, one that feared God, and of good report amongst the nation of the Jews; and there is no doubt but such persons had some veneration

veneration for the Jewish scriptures, which the true God was described. But this is not material. The great arguments *Peter* makes use of, were not derived from *scripture*, but *facts* : such as the miracles of *Christ*, his death, and resurrection the third day, and the apostle being commanded of him, after his resurrection, to declare to all men, that *God had ordained him to be the judge of quick and dead*. Of these things he declared that *God had chosen him for a witness*, therefore he relates them to *Cornelius* as the proper foundation of his faith. And when he adds, *To him gave all the prophets witness*; he did it, not for the sake of *Cornelius* who needed not the testimony of the prophets to know he was accepted of God; but for the sake of those of the circumcision who came with *Peter*, and who were surprised that the gospel should be preached to the *Gentiles*, and even astonished when they saw the gifts of the *Holy Ghost* poured out on them. *verses 43, &c.*

that these passages, which our au-
 cites to prove that the apostles reason-
 ed of the *Old Testament* with Gen-
 in order to convert them, are very
 ally alledged ; and I believe I may safe-
 affirm, that no one single instance of
 nature can be produced out of the
 e *New Testament*, notwithstanding
 confident assertion to the contrary.
 different circumstances of *Jews* and
Isaiah made it necessary, that very dif-
 ferent methods should be taken in order
 to convince them of the truth of *Christi-*
anism. *Jews* were to be argued with as
 i. e. as persons enjoying a for-
 revelation from God ; and it was
 necessary to convince them, that the cha-
 racter of *Christ*, and the whole scheme
 of *Christianity*, were agreeable to the
 design, and predictions of that reve-
 lation. But what would it have signified,
 if *Paul* at *Athens*, in a congregation
 of Athen Philosophers, had reasoned out
 of *Jeremiah* and *Habakkuk*, and other
 prophets ? Such names would have
 excited him contempt, instead of ha-
 ving gained him converts. And there-
 fore

fore we find him arguing from quite
ferent topicks ; shewing the folly and
reasonableness of Idolatry, from the
ture and perfections of God, and ex-
ing men to righteousness and virtue, fr
the consideration of a future Judgment
Jesus Christ, of which God hath g
assurance unto all men, in that he
raised him for the dead. See
xvii. 31. and also *Acts* xvi. 15,
with many other instances that might
mentioned.

Indeed the whole argument from
phesies hath been intirely mistaken
misrepresented by our author. He
ters and insults the apostles, for pre-
ing to prove particular events by pre-
ing prophecies, which he thinks di-
belong to them ; for instance, that
was born of a virgin, because *Isaiah*
Behold a virgin shall conceive, &c.
that he went into Egypt because
says, *Out of Egypt have I call*
son. Whereas the ridicule falls en-
on himself, because the apostles nev-
tend to prove events by prophecies
after having solidly proved the fact

k of, which as to their evidence
 intirely independent of prophecies,
 their agreement with those pro-
 phesies. So that if these prophecies
 not originally refer to these facts,
 still the facts remain, and are pro-
 by undeniable evidence. The wri-
 of the Jewish prophets could ne-
 prove the truth of events that ne-
 happened; and if these things did ac-
 come to pass they will prove all
 we want to be proved, whether ever
 Jewish scriptures spoke of them or not.
 what if some of those prophecies
 not originally refer to the things, to
 He they are applied by the *New Tes-*
 tament writers; will it follow that there
 other events agreeable to plain and
 predictions? or that if all the grand
 signs of the *Messiah* are to be found
 in *Christ*, therefore he cannot be the *Mes-*
 siah, &c. because some passages are applied
 to him, which we cannot prove did ori-
 ginally belong to him? These are infe-
 llible no one would ever have thought
 that persons of our authors *great in-*
 tellect and sagacity.

Upon

Upon the whole then : as the apostles did certainly prove, that the suffering and resurrection of *Christ*, and the preaching the gospel to the *Gentiles*, were agreeable to the ancient prophecies of the *Old Testament*, taken in their *literal sense* ; so 'tis reasonable to think when ever they applied other passages to him, they were such as by the *Jews* themselves were usually applied to the *Messiah*. And therefore tho' no absolute proof can be drawn from such passages for the truth of *Christianity* ; so neither will citing them yield any just ground of objection against it : and tho' such passages would have been of no avail to the *Gentiles*, with whom they were not made use of, yet were they necessary to satisfy the *Jews*, and were therefore justly insisted on by the apostles. To the advantage of an adversary's confession hath never yet been thought a fair way of disputing : and it seems to me to have been particularly necessary in the case of the apostles, because 'tis very probable, that if they had omitted to take notice of the

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agreement between such passages and our
 Saviour's character, the *Jews* would have
 objected against his being the *Messiah*,
 on account of his not having such
 predictions fulfilled in him. And even
 on the supposition that many of these
 passages were not originally intended to
 refer to the *Messiah*; yet as they had
 been applied to him in our Saviour's
 name, it seems an instance of the wisdom
 and care of providence, so to order the
 circumstances of our Saviour's life, as
 that even these supposed prophecies should
 appear to have been verified in him; ac-
 cordingly to the constant method of God's
 dealing with men, to have pity on their
 infirmities, and to accommodate the dispen-
 sations of his providences to their weak-
 nesses and prejudices, as far as is consist-
 ent with his perfections. If the modern
Jews have other notions of some of these
 passages than their forefathers had; this
 will prove indeed, that the application of
 them to *Christ* is not the proper me-
 thod to convince them of the truth
 of *Christianity*: but it will not prove
 that they were improperly urged by
 the

the apostles to the *Jews* of their own time who had different apprehensions of them and can therefore be no just ground for their treating *Christianity* with insolence and contempt. Unless the modern *Jews* sacrifice all their hopes of the *Messiah* to their prejudices, they must necessarily allow that some passages of the *Old Testament* speak of him, and relate to the times of his coming ; because they have no other reasonable foundation for such hope, but what they have in the writings of their prophets. Now probably even these passages may not be without their difficulties ; and the *Jews* some years hence may think there is as little reason for applying them to the *Messiah*, as the modern *Jews* think there was for applying some of those to *Jesus Christ*, which were interpreted of him by the apostles : and therefore they would not think it unfair in a *Christian* to dispute with them for the truth of *Christianity*, from prophecies acknowledged by themselves to refer to the *Messiah* ; so neither are the apostles to be blamed for arguing on the same foundation.

with the *Jews* of their own time.
 What is there in all this to prove that
Christianity is founded on the *allegorical*,
 the *false sense* of scripture? Because
 apostles sometimes prudently endea-
 voured to prevent the ill effects of par-
 tial prejudices, doth it therefore fol-
 low that they never used any solid argu-
 ment at all? Or because the *Jews*, in
 our Saviour's time, applied some things to
 the *Messiah*, which might not originally
 belong to him, is it a certain consequence
 therefore there are no prophecies
 in the *Old Testament* relating to him?
 Or because some passages, being only
 partial prophecies, are proofs only to
 those who believe them prophecies,
 that the literal accomplishment of
 prophecies is not to be esteemed a pro-
 of? It may safely be allowed,
 without prejudice to *Christianity*, that the
 apostles did sometimes quote scripture
 according to the general interpretation
 which they wrote to: not indeed as
 proofs in themselves; but because
 it would be a satisfaction to those they
 were concerned with, to see some cir-

cumstance in the life of *Christ*, and
ing to such a supposed prophecy of
Messiah. But it doth not therefore
low that they either thought such
tions *real proofs* themselves; much
that they used them as the *only proof*
with those who did not know any
of them, or did not believe them
proofs. Since therefore p. 83. *Chri-*
nity is not founded on *allegorical*
pretations of scripture, given by
and his apostles; this ought not to
ny obstacle or stumbling block in the
of the conversion of the *Jews*
Christianity; and our author hath
himself, either a very ignorant
honest man, in representing the
of the gospel as founded solely on
when he cannot produce one sin-
legory alledged as a proper and
sive proof by *Christ*, or any of
files.

What he mentions p. 83. in
sition to what I have been
viz. how much *allegory* was
amongst the Pagans, being culti-
many of the philosophers the

well as theologers ; by some as the
 method of delivering doctrines ; but by
 as the method of explaining away
 absurdities ; is indeed a very disingenu-
 and unmannerly comparison of *pa-*
anism and *Christianity*, but hath not
 least shadow or appearance of argu-
 in it. If *Christianity* can be pro-
 to be clogged with any absurdities,
 to have no better reasons to support it
 the *pagan* religion had, I will readi-
 own we have need enough of allego-
 to defend it ; tho' I should have but
 mean opinion of a religion that needed
 weak and wretched a defence. But till
 be done, to insinuate that *Christia-*
 hath no other support than allegory,
 that both the religion of the gospel
 the proof of it are upon a level with
 superstitions of *paganism*, that cover-
 over the most monstrous impieties and
 rdities with allegory ; is such an in-
 ce of immorality in this author, as he
 I think upon reflection greatly con-
 n himself for If he can find out
 Christians that take their *Christia-*
 from *Origen*, *Austin*, or any other

of the fathers he quotes ; or that reck
 them proper judges of the sense of scrip-
 ture, and in matters of faith, I leave them
 to his correction ; and do not begrudge
 them the honour of reconciling the
 passages he cites, and others he might have
 quoted, with reason and scripture : I
 methinks he ought to be merciful in his
 censures, when he remembers the many
 blunders, wilful misrepresentations, false
 construings of plain latine, and the like,
 which the author of a late *discourse of free
 thinking*, who cannot I suppose be
 known to him, was proved to be guilty
 of. And as for the author I have been
 arguing with, he hath made so many
 just applications, false quotations, and
 like, as I fear argue, not so much want
 of understanding, as a wicked and
 perverse disposition of mind. And
 the many base methods made use of
 to undermine the Christian religion by
 and the many impertinences and
 methods of reasoning made use of
 to support it by others, I cannot help
 observing, that as *Christianity*, owe
 its first spreading, not to humane
 considerations

wisdom ; so the after support of it
 must be attributed, not to the conduct and
 of its professors and advocates, but
 the power and providence of almighty
 God.

I have only one thing more to mention
 on this head, which is what our author
 writes p. 19. &c, viz. *That Christianity*
is wholly revealed in the Old Testa-
ment, not literally ; but mystically, and
that therefore Christianity is mystical
Judaism ; and that therefore the apostles
used allegories, not as arguments ad ho-
minem, but as proper and the only proofs
of their allegorical religion. This put in
 plain english is, that *Christianity* is no-
 thing but an heap of absurdities, contra-
 dictions, and false and idle interpretati-
 ons of the *Jewish* writings ; and that
 Christ and his apostles made use of for-
 cible ridiculous interpretations of scrip-
 ture to support it. Every one that
 reads *allegorical* and *mystical*, must al-
 ready know that I have not misrepresented him.
 I am for his own sake, he should
 have made so bitter and so unjust
 charges this author's plain meaning in

a reflection as this. If he hath the cause
 he writes for at heart, this way can never
 be thought by any wise man a proper
 method to support it: and therefore
 with all his pomp of citations, he ought
 hereafter evermore to be looked on as a
 wretched advocate for infidelity, who
 hath no better methods to defend it than
 by flandering and reviling *Christianity*.
 To calumniate and scoff at is not to
 argue; but certainly proves that he, who
 makes use of this method, hath either a
 very bad cause to defend, or hath either
 no sense nor honesty to defend a good
 one. Which part of the character of
 our author best, I leave his own con-
 science and the world to judge of. There
 were many predictions in the
Testament of things to happen under
 times of the *Messiah*, I have already
 shewn; I mean things *literally*, not *allegorically*
literally spoken of; and therefore it will
 follow, not that *Christianity* is the *allegorical*
sense of the Old Testament, but that
 there are many things in *Christianity* cor-
 responding to the plain predictions of the
Testament; and that the shewing the
 correspondence between the prophecies

Testament, and their completion un-
 the *New*, is a very proper method of ar-
 guing with those who allow the authority
 of the *Old Testament* ; and that such ar-
 guments and proofs will be to them con-
 vincing, and a proper foundation for their
 faith. But what have *Gentiles*, men
 who knew nothing of the *Jewish* religi-
 on or writings, to do with *Jewish* prophe-
 cies ; especially with the mystical, *i. e.*
 in a false sense of these prophecies ? And
 where will *this wise man, this dis-*
puter bring any one instance to prove,
 that the apostles ever preached up *Juda-*
ism, in order to convert a *Gentile* to
Christianity ? Or doth he so little under-
 stand the writings of the *O'd* and *New*
Testament, as not to know the vast
 difference between the two religions they
 maintain. *Christianity* in all its main
 principles and duties hath no manner of
 dependence on the *Jewish* religion ; and
 those who have never seen the writ-
 ings of the prophets may form as
 a scheme of the religion of the
 Gospel, as those that are ever so through-
 acquainted with them ; and of con-
 vidence a person may be a sincere be-

liever in *Jesus Christ*, who hath ne
 heard of *Moses and the prophets*. At
 this seems to have been the case w
 the first *Gentiles* converted to *Chri
 nity*. The apostles staid but a very li
 while in many places where they prea
 ed the gospel, and therefore inculca
 only the more necessary truths that w
 to be believed ; such as that *Jesus*
 the son of God, that he died for the
 of men, and rose again for their ju
 fication ; and all who professed their
 lief of these things were baptised w
 out exception, without any the least i
 mation of the necessity of their
 derstanding *Judaism*, or attempt
 convert them by *Jewish allegories*,
 may be seen in *the Acts of the A
 stles*. Yea farther it seems to have b
 one principal end of *St. Paul's* writ
 his epistles, to keep the *Gentile* con
 from too high an esteem and ven
 tion for *Judaism*, and to perswade th
 not to meddle with *Jewish* disp
 and questions, nor to conform to
 of their rites and ceremonies ; from
 typical, mystical sense of which he

far from pretending to argue, that he
 condemns them as *weak and beggerly ele-*
ments, and calls them *shadows* only in
 comparison of the more excellent duties
 of *Christianity*. And indeed as there
 is not one single instance to be produced
 where any of the apostles lay any stress on,
 or pretend to argue from allegory, or to
 convince men of the truth of *Christiani-*
 ty by perswading them, first, to turn my-
 self *Jews*; I leave this gentleman to his
 conscience, to examine whether he
 can justify so apparently false and scanda-
 lous a charge on *Christianity*, by any of the
 principles of justice or honour; and hear-
 ing God that he may be at last pre-
 pared with to examine the evidence for
 the truth of it, with a mind free from par-
 tiality and prejudice, that *the things of*
peace may not be finally hid from



C H A P. XIII.

The CONCLUSION

THUS have I endeavour'd to give some account of the nature of the *Old Testament* prophecies, and the reasons of their citation in the *New*. But before I dismiss our author, 'tis necessary I should add, that supposing the difficulties which attend the quotations out of the *Old Testament*, by the apostles, were much greater than they really are, yet even these would not affect the credit, or the truth of *Christianity*. Had this been the sort of proof that the first preachers of the gospel insisted on, he would have wanted much more to the purpose than I apprehend he now hath done; and

proper way of converting men to faith of the gospel would have been, to have convinced them of the truth and authority of the *Jewish* revelation. this is a supposition contrary to the main practice of the apostles, as far as we have any account of them in the scriptures; they never pretending to argue with *Gentiles* from *Jewish* prophecies, to explain facts; no nor with the *Jews* themselves from prophecies alone, but from prophecies and facts together; because 'twas necessary, with respect to them, that *Jesus Christ* should be proved both a *prophet*, and *that particular prophet*, or *Messiah*, whom they expected. indeed, after the conversion of the *Gentiles* to the faith of *Christ*, the church were a mixed society of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, it is no wonder that in epistles written for the general benefit, there should be a mixture of each kind of argument; especially since one main subject of almost all the epistles, that are now extant, was a *Jewish* question, *viz.* how long, and over whom *Jewish* ceremonial law was to be in

in force. The application of *Jew* scripture, on such an occasion, to *Jew* was exceeding proper, and was sure to have its influence and weight. But on other occasions, when the apostles were preaching the gospel to *Gentiles* only, they mentioned the *Jewish* scripture or religion, there is not one passage in the whole *New Testament* to render it probable.

Suppose then that there are some passages cited by the *New Testament* which we cannot well account for, or of which we certainly know are applied to occasions they did not originally refer to, what will follow? The subversion of *Christianity*, and the imposture of *Christ* and his apostles? This our author has been endeavouring to prove, in his book, but, thanks be to God, without success. The consequence will be this, that such passages, which we cannot demonstrate to be applied contrary to their original intention, and yet which we know not how to account for, they must remain in their present uncertainty; and no argument can be drawn from

support the religion of the gospel, so
 whether will they furnish any reasonable
 objection against it. And as to those pas-
 ses which do evidently appear to be
 applied to different occasions than what
 originally refer to, if any such there
 be, it will be sufficient to say of them,
 the apostles, who did thus apply
 them, had sufficient reason to do it; that
 were particular circumstances that
 made such quotations necessary, and that
 for whose use they were made,
 understood the justness and propriety of
 them; or that we understand not the pre-
 cise meaning of the forms of the citati-
 on, nor the purposes for which scripture
 is then usually cited, nor the interpre-
 tation that was usually put upon the pas-
 ses that are most liable to exception.
 I apprehend that, before our author
 and his friends will be able to do *Christi-*
 anity any great disservice, they must make
 out that there could be no circum-
 stances relating to persons, times, or
 places that could make such an ap-
 plication of scripture proper; and they
 must show the exact meaning of those ex-
 pressions,

pressions, *This was done that it might be fulfilled, Then was the scripture fulfilled, &c.* as they were then in use amongst the *Jews*; and when it can be proved that the apostles used these for a quotation in a different sense from what others did, or put another interpretation on the *Old Testament* prophecies than the true, or generally received one; I know not but we may then have some reason to be in pain for them, tho' even this will not undermine the truth of *Christianity*. For the truth and certainty of this depends, not solely upon the supposition of their being inspired, much less upon the influence of a continual inspiration; but upon the truth of the sacred history, viz. the life and death, and resurrection of our blessed Lord. If there be any solid proof of this, *Christianity* will maintain its ground, and stand firm against all the attacks of infidelity; even tho' it could be proved that the writings of the apostles, which are now extant, were not all penned under divine inspiration. If it can be proved that there was such a person

his Christ, and that the doctrines and
 cepts, delivered in the gospels, were
 ht by him, and the miracles there re-
 ed actually performed by him ; that
 urthertheless he was maliciously put to
 h by the *Jews*, but raised again from
 dead the third day, according to what
 himself foretold ; and that after a won-
 ul ascension into heaven, he sent
 n his holy spirit on his apostles, ac-
 ding to his promise ; it will then un-
 ably follow, that he was a prophet
 of God, and that the religion he
 ht is of divine obligation. Now tho-
 being under the peculiar direction of
 spirit of God would be a very great
 ntage to persons giving this testimo-
 and is what I apprehend to be the
 case of the apostles, yet this is not
 ffary, in the nature of the thing,
 render their testimony credible.
 upon the supposition that they
 e persons of probity and honour,
 actually saw and heard the things
 which they speak, they were then pro-
 witnesses, and their testimony
 to be received. And this is
 what

what the *New Testament* writers themselves appeal to. Thus *Luke*, in the beginning of his gospel, tells us, *that had a perfect understanding of the things believed amongst Christians, as being delivered unto him by those, who, from beginning, were eye witnesses and ministers of the word*, Luke i. 2, 3. And *St. John* declares, *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you*, John i. 3. And the apostles, *Peter* and *John*, answering before the council of *Jerusalem*, tell them, *We cannot speak the things which we have seen and heard*, Acts iv. 20. So that the apostles do not found their claim of being believed, upon the foot of inspiration only, but upon their having been witnesses of the things of which they write. And they delivered nothing but what they saw and heard, so far their testimony was to be received and submitted to. And 'till our author, and his friends, disprove the accounts they have given, they will never be able to disprove the truth of *Christianity*.

there is not indeed, as I apprehend, any
 se to make so large an allowance as
 to the objectors against *Christianity*.
 those, who deny the inspiration of
 apostles, prove the falsity of that ac-
 count we have in the *Acts*, of the des-
 cend of the *Holy Ghost* upon their heads,
 of the wonderful works they decla-
 red they wrought by the power of the
 Spirit. Let them shew us for what
 reasons they immediately changed their
 notions of the nature of the *Messiah's*
 kingdom, and what could reasonably be
 offered to induce them to rejoyce in be-
 coming *accounted worthy to suffer for the sake*
of Christ, who had hitherto entertain-
 ed very strong expectations of high ad-
 vancement in worldly honour and dig-
 nity. Let them farther tell us how the
 churches were supported, and by what
 means they were governed at their first preach-
 ing of *Christianity*. What was it that in-
 spired these poor fishermen with such
 courage before the face of the ru-
 lers and chiefs of the people? Whence
 did they learn the arts of apologizing in

so just a manner, and upon every emergency, before their enemies. How can their discourses so coherent, their scheme so consistent, and all their remaining epistles so very agreeing with each other, if they were either weak dishonest men, or were not under the influence of some good spirit to direct them? These are such difficulties in the deistical scheme, as seem to me vastly exceed any that can be pretended to follow the *Christian*. And I profess I can as easily believe the grossest contradiction in nature, as to persuade myself to think that eleven or twelve poor mean illiterate *Jews*, fishermen and publicans by occupation, hated by their own nation, and persecuted by others, could ever invent so artful a story as that of the birth and death, and resurrection of *Christ*, and then propagate the cheat in all parts of all persecutions, and disperse themselves into so many nations, and form one uniform consistent scheme, and write so many epistles at such different times and places, agreeing in all the main doctrines.

cepts, advices, motives, and the like,
 at last bring the whole world into
 scheme. These are such romantick
 positions as will not easily gain credit
 in any reasonable considerate men.
 The conduct of the apostles is indeed ca-
 accountable for, upon the suppositi-
 of the truth of their doctrine, and
 being under a divine assistance and
 ence. But he who denies this, must,
 he would act the part of a reasonable
 man, disprove the truth of the gospel
 story, and tell us upon what other views
 principles the apostles acted, that
 could be supposed, either to inspire them
 with courage sufficient to prosecute their
 mission, or with wisdom to render them
 successful in it. Till this be done, it
 signifies but little to start particular
 of Ch. alties in the sacred writings, or to
 state the uncertainty of our canon,
 the differences of learned men in
 and explaining it. These things may cause
 of weak and unstable minds to
 the truth ; but I am perswa-
 can never be sufficient to out-
 weigh

weigh the many arguments which prove
 That JESUS CHRIST is
 KING of *Israel*, and SAVIOUR
 the world.

F I N I S.



